



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT" L

No Merit, No Problem!

Presented by Rabbi Zacharia Schwartz, Kollel Adjunct

"I have become small from all of the kindnesses and all of the truth that You have done with Your servant" (32:11)

As Yaakov prepares for his dreaded encounter with Esav and his army of 400 men, he entreats Hashem to protect him and see him through the ordeal. In his prayer, Yaakov expresses concern that he has "become small" because of all that Hashem had done for him during his twenty years with Lavan. Rashi explains that Yaakov was concerned that his merit may have been used up on all the things that Hashem had already done for him, despite Hashem having promised to protect him while Yaakov was on his way down to Lavan. The Ramban asks, however, that Hashem had just promised to protect Yaakov once again as he was about to leave Lavan's house. Given the fact that no particular or additional kindness had been bestowed upon Yaakov since that time, why was Yaakov concerned that his merits had been consumed?

Ramban offers an alternative understanding of Yaakov's words. He explains that Yaakov was really making a straightforward declaration: "I am small and undeserving of all the kindness that You have bestowed upon me until now." Yaakov was expressing that he was never deserving of the kindness that Hashem did for him. His plea for help was never predicated on the notion that he was deserving of such help.

The kindness that Hashem bestows upon every person from the day that he or she is born is beyond comprehension. There is nothing that we can do to truly deserve or repay that kindness, and it would certainly be foolish to ask for more kindness from Hashem because "we deserve it." On the other hand, we see from Yaakov that we don't need to deserve it. The key is to recognize how much Hashem does for us simply because He loves us, and to approach Him as a child approaching a loving father who just gives in order to give.

Wishing you a Good Shabbos!

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TABLE TALK

Point to Ponder

"To my lord, to Esav, so said your servant Yaakov..."

Yaakov displayed such honor to Esav because Esav was his older brother. (Ramban)

If one's older brother is a wicked person, he is not obligated to honor him. (Yoreh Deah 240)

Since Esav was a wicked person Yaakov was not obligated to honor him. Why did Yaakov feel that it was necessary for him to honor Esav?

Parsha Riddle

Why did Binyamin merit having the Kodesh HaKodoshim (Holy of Holies) built in his territory?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

Why did Lavan hug and kiss Yaakov?

Answer: In order to feel him out for any jewels or gold.

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

In *parashas Vayishlach* (32:8), the Torah relates that when Yaakov, upon returning to the land of Canaan, learned of Esav's apparently hostile intentions toward him, he "became very frightened, and it distressed him." Some consider this worry to have been a moral failure (*Shemoneh Perakim* #7), and some explain that this shortcoming was actually the reason the angel was able to injure Yaakov in the course of their struggle (*Hadar Zekeinim* v. 19, Riva v. 26).

This idea that worry can be self-fulfilling arises in *halachah* as well. The Talmud (Shabbas 128b) rules that a lamp may be lit for a woman who is in childbirth (and is thus considered to be in mortal danger) even if she is blind and will not directly benefit from it, since this will "settle her mind," since she will think "If there is something that needs to be done in the course of childbirth, the lamp will enable my friend to see and she will do it for me." The woman's worry that her needs are not being properly attended to may exacerbate her condition (*Tosafos*), and so "settling her mind" is considering a matter of life and death (*pikuach nefesh*) and therefore justifies Sabbath desecration.

Based on this principle, R. Moshe Feinstein rules that if a woman in labor who is being driven to the hospital says that she is frightened of traveling on her own even after we attempt to explain to her that there is nothing to be afraid of, this, too, is considered *pikuach nefesh*, and her husband or mother may accompany her (*Shut. Igros Moshe OC* 1:132). Some add the additional justification that the companion may be able to provide assistance to the woman at the hospital, such as the provision of important information to medical personnel (*Nishmas Avraham*, 2nd edition OC p. 514).

In other contexts, however, it is generally forbidden to violate a Biblical prohibition of the Sabbath, even on behalf of someone in mortal danger, in order to satisfy a mere desire of the patient where there is no objective life-saving benefit involved, unless there is a medical diagnosis in a particular case that failing to satisfy the patient's wishes may engender mortal danger (*Aruch ha-Shulchan* 306:20).

PRESENTED BY
RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I?

1. I am tasteless.
2. I was pulled.
3. What a nerve.
4. I am a SIN for YOU.

#2 WHO AM I?

1. I lost my head.
2. I lost my teeth.
3. I lost blessing.
4. I lost my status.

Last Week's Answers

#1 The stones that Yaakov surrounded himself with (I was many, I was one, I was a Mizbeich, I was a monument.)

#2 Eretz Yisrael (I was promised to Yaakov, I caused Sefer Bereishis, My air wizens, I am watched all year long)

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CHANUKAH CELEBRATION

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