



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT"l

These Were the Days

Presented by Rabbi Moshe Sadwin, Kollel Adjunct

"And these were the days of Yaakov. The years of his life were one hundred and forty-seven years" (47:28)

Yaakov has reached the end of his life. Before recording his age, the Torah states, "These were the days of Yaakov." This phrase is quite puzzling. First, why mention *days* if the Torah is noting the *years* of his life. Furthermore, why does the Torah have to write this preface at all?

The Mussar masters derive an essential lesson from the Torah's wording. A person's life is not really measured by the actual amount of time he/she spent on the planet, but rather on the quality of his/her time – was the time filled with meaning or was it wasted on frivolities? A person can conceivably live for many years, but if the time was wasted on meaningless pursuits, that life was truly quite short! Only if a person utilizes the days properly is it considered that they *lived* that day.

Thus, when the Torah writes that these are the *days* of Yaakov and then continues that the *years* were one hundred and forty-seven years, it means that each day of Yaakov's life was filled with meaning and contributed to the one hundred and forty-seven years. Yaakov's years were full in the sense that each day of each year could be counted as real life.

The Midrash states that only the days which were properly utilized can count towards one's reward in the World to Come, and wasted days may detract from the reward. Rav Aharale Roth zt"l points out that even if one, in the past, misused their time, they should not think that all is lost. Teshuva, sincere repentance, can retroactively give value to those lost days and have them 'count' toward a meaningful life.

Let us take this message and take stock of our days to ensure that they are full of good deeds, so that we will have a truly long and well-spent life!

Wishing you a Good Shabbos!

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TABLE TALK

Point to Ponder

Yaakov lived in the land of Egypt for seventeen years... (47, 28)

Why is there no separation in the Sefer Torah between our Parsha and the previous one? When Yaakov passed away, the hearts of Bnei Yisrael were closed on account of their enslavement. (Rashi)

How do we know that this is a separate Parsha if there is no space in between them? Maybe it is a continuation of the previous Parsha?

Parsha Riddle

What did Yosef merit as a reward for going to Eretz Yisrael to bury his father?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

Why did Bnei Yisrael specifically move to Goshen?

Answer: It belonged to them since it had been given to Sarah by Pharaoh many years earlier. (Pirkei D'Rebi Eliezer)

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

Parashas Vayechi records Yaakov's deathbed blessings to, and prophecies regarding, his sons. To Dan, he declared that he "will avenge his people," and that he would be "a serpent on the highway, a viper by the path, that bites a horse's heels so its rider falls backward." (49:16-17) Many commentaries, including Rashi and Ramban, understand these verses to refer to Dan's descendant Shimshon (Samson), and they explain the image of toppling a rider by biting his horse's heels as a reference to Shimshon's final, most devastating blow against Israel's enemy the Philistines: his suicidal destruction of the building in which the Philistines were giving thanks to their god Dagon for giving Shimshon into their hands and celebrating their victory against him, by striking against its pillars, by which act he killed many of their number (*Shoftim* 16:23-31).

Rashi's grandson Rashbam, however, sharply criticizes this interpretation of Yaakov's remarks, arguing that it is unthinkable that Yaakov would have spoken about the fate of a particular individual, who fell into the hands of the Philistines who gouged out his eyes, and died with them "in an evil way (*inyan ra*)."

When Rashbam describes Shimshon's end as "an evil way," he may simply be referring to the tragedy of his death, but it is perhaps possible that he intends an element of moral censure as well. The *halachah* is generally adamantly opposed to suicide; another famous Biblical instance of suicide, that of King Shaul upon suffering a catastrophic loss to the Philistines and fearing his imminent capture by them (*Shmuel* 1 31:1-7), is much discussed in *halachic* sources, with most justifying it on various grounds (*Bereishis Rabbah* 34:13; *Radak Shmuel* 1 31:5; *Yam Shel Shlomo BK* 8:59), and a minority opinion condemning it as sinful (see *Tosafos al ha-Torah Bereishis* 9:5). Remarkably, however, there is apparently no discussion of Shimshon's suicide in the traditional *halachic* literature! It is possible that it was taken for granted that it was justified under the circumstances, given the hopelessness of his personal situation on the one hand, and the tremendous blow against Israel's mortal enemy that he found himself in a position to inflict on the other, but the absence of any explicit analysis is nevertheless striking.

PRESENTED BY
RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I?

1. I am on Rabbeinu Asher.
2. I am for Asher.
3. I am by Tosfos Yom Tov.
4. I am a delicacy.

#2 WHO AM I?

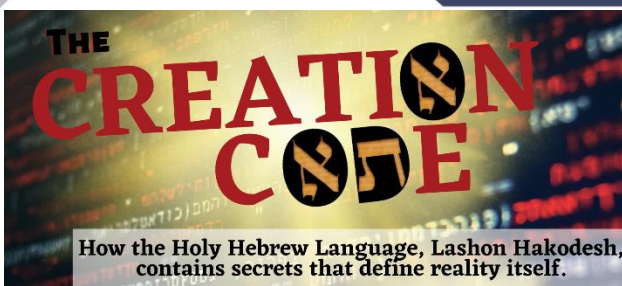
1. I was an orphan.
2. I was a slave.
3. I was in jail.
4. I was a king.

Last Week's Answers

#1 70 (I was for the Babylonian exile, I was for going down to Egypt, I was for the Sanhedrin, Ayin.)

#2 The trope (cantillation) at the beginning of the parsha (Get up, And go, Fourth one, I am from Ezra.)

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Rabbi Hillel Shaps

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