



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT" L

Spice of Life

Presented by Rabbi Hillel Shaps, Kollel Scholar and Director of Special Projects

Although with regards to other holidays, the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer (Pesachim 68a) is that one may choose to focus solely on the spiritual pursuit of Torah study and not hold a Yom Tov feast, when it comes to Shavuos, "everybody agrees that we also need *lachem* – for yourselves." There must be some amount of physical enjoyment and feasting. The reason offered by the Gemara: it's the day that the Torah was given.

This reason seems a little counterintuitive. One would have thought that Shavuos being the day the Torah was given would be a reason to spend the entire day focused only on spiritual endeavors like Torah study – not a reason to make sure to eat a hearty meal. Why specifically regarding Shavuos do all agree that there must be some amount of feasting?

Rashi offers a very straightforward explanation. We must make sure to feast on Shavuos in order to demonstrate that we feel fortunate to have received the Torah. Rabbi Eliyahu Lopian, however, suggests an alternate reason. Throughout history, many secular philosophers have adopted the perspective that in order for a person to achieve spiritual heights, he or she must abstain and disengage from all things physical. Our Torah teaches us otherwise. A person can grow spiritually by engaging with the material world and directing it for the sake of Heaven.

The Gemara (Kiddushin 30b) relates that G-d says: "I created the Yetzer Hara (Evil Inclination) and I created the Torah as *tavlin*." While in the simple reading of the Gemara, the word *tavlin* is understood as "antidote," Rabbi Lopian suggests that it can be understood by its more literal translation: "spices." G-d says: I created the Yetzer Hara – the physical world which lures us away from spiritual pursuits, but I created the Torah as a spice – to sweeten and enhance that physical world by elevating it in the service of G-d.

The reason everyone agrees that on Shavuos we must have feasting is because it is through our eating and drinking we demonstrate our ability to elevate the physical through Torah and Mitzvos. How fortunate we are to have the *Toras Chaim*, the Torah of Life, which allows us to infuse every aspect of our lives with sanctity!

Wishing you a Good Shabbos and a Good Yom Tov!

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TABLE TALK

Point to Ponder

Count the sons of Levi... every male from one month of age and up... (3:15)

From one month after they are out of the category of a neifel... as we see this tribe is counted from the womb. Yocheved was counted in the count of seventy people coming down to Mitzrayim, even though she was born as they crossed the border... (Rashi)

If the source to count the Leviim at a younger age is from Yocheved, they should be counted from when they are in the womb, or at least from birth. Why do we give the source as Yocheved, and then wait until the child is a month old to count them?

Parsha Riddle

Who flew before the airplane was invented?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

When Chazal (Megilla 3a) refer to 'final letters', they call them 'menatzpach', which is an acronym for mem, nun, tzadi, phei and chaf. This is not in the order of the Alef Bais. Why?

Answer: If you divide the letters, mem and nun spell min (from). The rest of the letters spell tzofim (prophets). This teaches that the prophets reinstated the final letters. (Tosafos)

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

In parashas Bamidbar, the Torah records that there were a total of 22,000 Levites and 22,273 (non-Levite) firstborn, and that Hashem instructed Moshe as follows:

Take the Levites in place of every firstborn of the Children of Israel ... And as for the redemptions of the two hundred and seventy-three of the firstborn of the Children of Israel who are in excess of the Levites; you shall take five shekels each according to the head count ... You shall give the money to Aharon and his sons, as redemptions of the additional ones among them. (3:39-48)

How were the two hundred and seventy-three who were required to pay five shekels chosen from among the 22,273 firstborn? The Talmud explains:

[Moshe] brought 22,000 slips, and he wrote on them: Levite, and on 273 additional ones he wrote: Five shekels. He mixed them up and placed them in a box. He said to them: Draw your slips. Everyone whose hand drew up a slip that said: Levite, he said to him: A Levite already redeemed you. Everyone whose hand drew up a slip that said: Five shekels, he said to him: Pay your redemption money and you may leave. (Sanhedrin 17a)

There are various other cases where the halachah endorses the use of a lottery to resolve otherwise unresolvable conflicting claims, such as the division of estate property among multiple heirs or partnership assets among the partners, but some authorities insist that a lottery may only be used to allocate equal portions, such as two fields of equal value, or two of different value when accompanied by an agreement that the winner of the field of greater value will pay the other the difference in value, but not to distribute unequal portions, insofar as they can be rendered equal by an agreement of the aforementioned type (Erech Shai CM 154:3).

Our lottery of the firstborn, however, seems to refute this position, since it would certainly have been possible to divide the total of 1,365 shekels among all the 22,273 firstborn and have each one pay approximately .06 shekels, and yet instead, two hundred and seventy-three were required to pay five shekels each, while the other 22,000 were not required to pay anything.

PRESENTED BY

RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I ?

1. We were from the funeral.
2. We were for the camps.
3. We flagged you down.
4. We were grouped in three.

#2 WHO AM I ?

1. I contain "weeks."
2. They arrived on my head.
3. I am third or ninth.
4. "Did anyone see a van?"

Last Week's Answers

#1 The "vuv" in וְיָקוּב (I come from Eliyahu, Guarantor for redemption, I sometimes connect, I can make you say "oh.")

#2 Shalom (I equal all, The blessing container, I am the last blessing, Love me and pursue me.)

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