



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT"l

Defending Dignity

Presented by Rabbi Moshe Sadwin, Kollel Adjunct

"The officers shall then speak to the people, and say, 'Is there any man among you who has built a new house, and has not begun to live in it? ... who has planted a vineyard and has not redeemed its first crop? ... who has betrothed a woman and not married her? Let him go home...' The officers shall then continue speaking to the people and say, 'Is there any man among you who is afraid or faint-hearted? Let him go home...'" (20:5-8)

When the Jewish people went to war, the officers would announce that anyone who is afraid should return home and not fight in battle. The Torah earlier lists three other people who should return home from the battlefield: 1) a person who has built a new home but has not yet dedicated it. 2) a person who has planted a vineyard and has not yet eaten from its fruit. 3) a person who was engaged to be married. Now, the Torah adds a fourth category: one who is afraid.

According to its simple meaning, the verse refers to a soldier who lacks bravery and is afraid of fighting in battle. The great sage, Rabi Yosi Hagelili (Sotah 44a), however, understands the verse to be referring to a soldier who is afraid to go to fight because he has committed a sin. He fears that in retribution for his sin, he will fall in battle. Rabi Yosi Hagelili explains further that, in fact, the only reason the Torah instructs the other three people (one who built a house, planted a vineyard, or betrothed a woman) to return home is to protect the dignity of the person who has committed a sin. If only those who had sinned would leave the battlefield, they would feel embarrassed since everyone would realize that they were departing due to their sins. The Torah, therefore, identifies other life scenarios that require a person to return from battle. With a variety of reasons why one might be departing, nobody would know if a person was leaving due to his sins or for another reason.

We can learn from here how important it is to protect the dignity of others and not, G-d forbid, cause them embarrassment. Even though this man committed a sin, the Torah is still so careful to guard him from possible embarrassment and will send other soldiers home from battle in order to protect his honor. We as well must be prepared to go to great lengths to avoid embarrassing others.

Wishing you a Good Shabbos!

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TABLE TALK

Point to Ponder

And it shall be that when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself two copies of this Torah in a scroll... (17:18)

Two copies of Torah scrolls; one to be placed in his treasury, and one that enters and goes with him (Rashi).

The scroll that goes out and enters with him was written like an amulet and hung on his arm (Sanhedrin 22a).

How can the Sefer Torah be hung from the arm of the King, when halacha dictates that a Sefer Torah must rest on something and cannot be hung (Berachos 24a)? In addition, Chazal (Yerushalmi Yoma 7:1) say that people should approach a Sefer Torah, rather than it be brought to them, since this is an embarrassment for a Sefer Torah. If so, how can a king carry a Sefer Torah with him to the public?

Parsha Riddle

What is the significance of the numerical value of the word 'bechor', firstborn son?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

In halacha, blood is compared to which liquid?

Answer: Water

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

In *parashas Shoftim* (17:14-15), the Torah states:

When you come to the Land ... and you will say "I will set a king over myself, like all the nations that are around me."

You shall surely set over yourself a king whom Hashem, your G-d, shall choose; from among your brethren shall you set a king over yourself; you cannot place over yourself a foreign man who is not your brother.

The Sages of the Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 20b), as well as later Jewish thinkers, are divided as to the sense of the phrase "You shall surely set over yourself a king." R. Yosi apparently maintains that it constitutes a *mitzvah* to appoint a king, and this is the view of Rambam (*Hilchos Melachim* 1:1). R. Nehorai, on the other hand, declares that this verse "was stated only in response to the Jewish people's complaint," i.e., it is not a *mitzvah* but merely a Divine response to the eventual (inappropriate) demand for a king by the Jewish people (in the time of Shmuel).

Abarbanel develops this position at length, arguing that there is no *mitzvah* whatsoever to appoint a king, and the Torah is merely responding to what Hashem was foretelling would transpire in the future: the Jews, in a display of foolishness and ingratitude to Hashem, motivated by their evil inclination, would demand a king, and the Torah accordingly commands that when this occurs, we may not choose whomever we want to be king, but must choose someone from among our brethren, of whom Hashem will approve.

In the development of his position, Abarbanel argues that autocracy and monarchy are by no means the only viable forms of government, and he holds up the examples of the Roman Republic, and the contemporary Republics of Venice, Florence, Lucca, Siena, Genoa, and Bologna, as shining examples of extremely successful non-monarchical governments.

On the other hand, Abarbanel concludes his discussion of the monarchy by vigorously arguing for the reactionary position that popular revolution, even against a tyrant, is absolutely forbidden. (He relates that he argued his case "before kings and their sages," against that of his non-Jewish colleagues who had espoused the remarkably progressive view of later Enlightenment thinkers that revolution against a despot is indeed appropriate.)

PRESENTED BY

RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I?

1. Somethings I cannot forgive.
2. You shouldn't, even though it's a mitzvah
3. I am not a scribe, yet I need a scroll.
4. I was oiled.

#2 WHO AM I?

1. For some, I was a must.
2. Mistake is my ticket.
3. Death lets you leave me.
4. My border protects.

Last Week's Answers

#1 Avoda Zara/Idols (I must be destroyed, I cause impurity, I can cause destruction of a city, I am strange.)

#2 Dam/Blood (I am the soul, Use salt, I am red, I am not stupid.)

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Men's Programming

Beis Medrash Night White Oak

Tuesdays at 8:30pm at SEJC, 10900 Lockwood Dr.

Join together on Tuesday evenings and be a part of the ruach for Beis Medrash Night White Oak! Join Rabbi Mandel and Rabbi Grossman in learning Hilchos Brachos, attend a shiur with Rabbi Biberfeld, or learn on your own.