



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT"L

It is an honor to present this week's Torah Minute from our archives. The following was penned by our founder, Rabbi Kalman Winter ZT"L.

This week, we start reading Shemos/Exodus, the second of the five books of the Torah. As the narrative begins, the Jewish people proliferate in number and strength in the land of Egypt. Pharaoh, fearing their emergence and development, enslaves his Jewish citizenry. The many years of servitude do not diminish their national aspirations to live as a free nation, the children of one living G-d. The period of redemption arrives and Moshe beckons Pharaoh to let his people go. Pharaoh responds and punishes the Jews ever more severely. In Chapter 5 Verses 4-8, Pharaoh commands that all straw and raw material necessary for making the bricks be denied to the Jews. He decrees that they should scour the countryside to secure their own materials and their required number of bricks to be prepared should not be decreased.

Overwhelmed by the severe workload, the Jews were weary. Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato, the author of the Mesilas Yesharim, comments that Pharaoh was quite calculating. His intention was not to break the Jews, but rather to occupy their hearts and minds to such an extent that there should remain no time, breath, or opportunity to think and plan for freedom. This, he writes, is the tool and design of the yetzer hara, the counterforce to good in each of us.

We go through life externally free, but internally enslaved. We are preoccupied with work, household chores, social engagements, material pursuits, Blackberries and cellphones. Precious little time is left for thought and contemplation. What is life's ultimate purpose? What does G-d want and seek from each of us? Scant consideration is given and devoted to the most important questions and issues. Many years ago, there was an ad for funding education. It was titled, "A mind is a terrible thing to waste." Likewise, we say, "A mind is a terrible thing to preoccupy."

Wishing you a Good Shabbos!

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TABLE TALK

Point to Ponder

“Vayehi” / It happened in those days that Moshe grew up and went to his brethren... (2:11)

The word “Vayehi” connotes a misfortune (Megilla 10b).

What misfortune occurred that compelled the Torah to introduce this section with the word “Vayehi”?

Parsha Riddle

“Shall I go summon a Jewish wet nurse?” (2:7)
The baby refused to nurse from an Egyptian woman, because Hashem said, “Shall the mouth that will converse with the Divine Presence drink impure milk?” (Rashi)

What halacha is derived from this?

Please see next week’s issue for the answer.

Last week’s riddle:

The scepter shall not pass from Yehuda... (49:10)

When in Jewish history was this instruction violated?

Answer: 1) When the Kingdom of Yisrael continued to have kings after Yeravam. 2) When the Chashmonaim became kings after overthrowing the Greeks. (Ramban 49:10)

HATORAH V’HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

In *parashas Shemos* (4:24-26), the Torah relates that Moshe Rabbeinu’s wife Tziporah performed an emergency field circumcision upon their son. The Talmud (*Avodah Zarah* 27a) records a dispute over whether a woman may perform a circumcision, and eventually proceeds to address the case of Tziporah:

And is there anyone who says that a woman may not perform circumcision? But isn’t it written: “Then Tziporah took [vattikkah] a flint and cut off the foreskin of her son.” This verse explicitly states that a circumcision was performed by a woman.

The Gemara answers that one should **read into** the verse: **And she caused to be taken [vattakkah]**, i.e., she did not take a flint herself. **But isn’t it written: And she cut off [vattikhrot]? Read into** the verse: **And she caused to be cut off [vattakhret], as she told another person** to take a flint and cut off her son’s foreskin, **and he did so**.

The Gemara provides an alternative explanation: **And if you wish, say** instead: **She came and began** the act, **and Moshe came and completed** the circumcision.

Post-Talmudic authorities disagree over the normative *halachah* on this question: some rule that a woman may absolutely not perform a circumcision, while others rule that she may do so as long as a man is not available, although a man is preferred if he is (see *Tosafos ibid.*; Rif *Shabbas* end of ch. 19).

The *Shulchan Aruch* cites only the lenient view. The Rema mentions the stringent view (as the opinion of “some”), and then adds that “the custom is to try to find a man” (*YD* 264:1). The Shach is puzzled by the Rema’s formulation: if the Rema merely means that we try to have a man perform the circumcision if one is available, then even the *Shulchan Aruch* agrees with this (and the mention of a custom to this effect is superfluous), but if the Rema means that even if a man is not available, we nevertheless refuse to allow a woman to perform a circumcision, then it is difficult to claim the existence of a “custom” governing an uncommon situation. Additionally, perhaps the reason women do not commonly perform circumcisions is simply because they do not know how to do so, but not because there is any inherent *halachic* problem with their doing so.

PRESENTED BY

RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I?

1. I saved the savior.
2. I am a god of Egypt.
3. Moshe wouldn’t strike me.
4. Sons were thrown to me.

#2 WHO AM I?

1. I was a sign.
2. I am for Lashon Harah.
3. I could remind you of snow.
4. I could get you locked up.

Last Week’s Answers

#1 Hamalach Hagoel (I was said to grandchildren, I am said at night, Some sing me, I am angelic.)

#2 Reuven (I gave my birthright to Yosef, I gave the priesthood to Levi, I gave the kingship to Yehuda, I personify repentance.)

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in Jewish Law
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