



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT"l

Spiritual Oxygen!

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

"And G-d spoke to Moshe in the Sinai Desert..." (1:1)

The Midrash expounds on the above verse noting that the Torah was given specifically in a desert and specifically in the presence of fire and water (from rain) on Mount Sinai. This, explains the Midrash, is to teach us that just as what one finds in a desert, as well as fire and water, are free for the taking for all of earth's inhabitants, so too, the Torah is given freely.

While it is indeed the case that Torah is freely accessible to all, it is a bit surprising that the Midrash wants to highlight this. Focusing on its availability seems to diminish its valuation in our eyes and runs in contrast to King Shlomo's famous statement, "It is more precious than pearls." (Mishlei 3:15) What perspective is this Midrash sharing with us by emphasizing the Torah's free availability?

Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv zt"l offers a beautiful explanation based on a fundamental observation of the Chovos Halevavos. The Chovos Halevavos (Shaar Hebechina Chapter 5) points out that one of the many examples of G-d's tremendous benevolence and careful design of our world is that those commodities that are most necessary for our survival are also the most accessible. For example, a person could not live for very long without breathing, and thank G-d, He makes air readily available. The next most important commodity for our survival is water and that too is quite abundant and accessible. This pattern continues for food, material for clothing and our other basic needs. Precious gems, on the other hand, are not at all necessary for our survival and indeed are quite difficult to come by.

It is in this light that the Midrash wishes us to view Torah. While air and water are most essential for our physical survival, Torah is the oxygen of our souls and the lifeblood of our spiritual survival. It is freely available because without it we cannot survive. Although the Torah is certainly very precious to us – "more precious than pearls" – we cannot view it only like a beautiful gem that we pull out of our drawer every once in a while. Rather, the Torah must permeate every moment of our lives, much like the air that we breathe.

If we bear this lesson in mind as we approach the holiday of Shavuot when we celebrate the Giving of the Torah, we can hopefully experience an even more profound level of joy to be recipients of such a gift. *Ki Heim Chayenu – For its words are our life!*

Wishing you a Good Shabbos!

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TABLE TALK

Point to Ponder

I have taken the Leviim from among Bnei Yisrael, in place of every firstborn... (3:12)

"Through the first born I acquired the Leviim; I took them in exchange for the firstborn. The firstborns had performed the avoda, but when they sinned with the Golden Calf they were disqualified. The Leviim, who did not participate in the idol worship, were chosen instead of them" (Rashi).

It seems from Rashi that the firstborns were destined to serve in the Bais Hamikdash, however, they lost it due to their worshipping of the Golden Calf. When Yaakov gave the berachos (Vayechi 49:3-4) to his sons, he told Reuven that he was destined, as firstborn, to be a Kohen and serve in the Bais Hamikdash, however, he lost it due to his haste. When did the firstborns lose their status, when Reuven sinned or at the sin of the Golden Calf?

Parsha Riddle

Why weren't men under the age of twenty recruited into the army of Bnei Yisrael?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

Which mitzvos in Parshas Emor and Parshas Behar are very similar?
Answer: The Mitzvah on every individual to count the Omer and the Mitzvah on Beis Din to count towards Yovel.

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

In parashas Bamidbar (1:18), the Torah relates that Moshe and Aharon gathered together the entire assembly ... **and they established their genealogy according to their families**, according to their fathers' household, by number of the names, from twenty years of age and up, according to their head count.

What is the meaning of the phrase "and they established their genealogy"? Rashi explains it to mean that they brought proof of their genealogy:

They brought the records of their pedigree and witnesses to confirm the prevalent presumption regarding their parentage, so that each might establish his pedigree with regard to the particular tribe.

Ramban disagrees and maintains that a simple declaration of their lineage was sufficient:

But it does not appear [correct to say] that they should have to bring genealogical documents and witnesses with regard to belonging to a [particular] tribe. Rather ... each man in the congregation brought his [half-] shekel and said to Moshe and the princes: "I so-and-so was born to such-and-such a person of such-and-such a family, which is of the tribe of Reuven," or some other tribe ...

Written genealogical records are mentioned in the book of Ezra, which relates that certain Kohanim who returned to Eretz Yisrael from the Babylonian exile

sought their genealogical records, but they could not be found, so they were disqualified from the priesthood. Hatirshasa told them that they should not eat from the most-holy offerings until there would arise a Kohen to [inquire of] the Urim and the Tumim.

There is extensive discussion among the *acharonim* over the *halachic* status of Kohanim in contemporary times. Some suggest that due to the lack of certainty of their lineage, they are not entitled to various privileges that the Torah grants Kohanim, and certain duties of honor and respect for Kohanim that the Torah mandates are not currently binding (*Shut. Rivash* #94; *Yefeh Mareh Berachos* 8:2; *Magen Avraham siman* 201 s.k. 4). Some even allow certain (limited) leniencies with respect to the marriage restrictions that the *halachah* places on Kohanim (*Shut. Maharashdam EH* #235; *Shut. Shevus Yaakov* 1:93), although many other authorities strongly reject the possibility of any such leniencies (*Shut. Chut ha-Shani* #17; *Shut. Keneses Yechezkel* #56; *Shut. Divrei Chaim* 1:EH:10; *Chikrei Lev EH* end of #2).

PRESENTED BY

RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I?

1. We did not serve.
2. Therefore, we did serve.
3. Five Shekel replacement.
4. Now we wash the blessers.

#2 WHO AM I?

1. I have 5 days before weeks.
2. Third or ninth.
3. Reception happened in me.
4. Did you see the van?

Last Week's Answers

#1 Torah (I bring blessing, I am compared to water, I am to guide, I am for night and I am for day.)

#2 Shemittah (Don't confuse me with Shavuot, Rest, I create holiness, I am for your money and fields.)

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KABALAS HATORAH & ME:

**FINDING OUR
INNER RUTH**

A Pre-Shavuot Shiur for Women
Presented by Mrs. Sara Malka Winter
Monday, May 22 at 8:15pm on Zoom

Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/6018534021>

Password: Winter

Dial-in number: 301-715-8592

Meeting ID: 601 853 4021 Phone Passcode: 667362