



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT"l

A Nation to Admire

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

And you shall keep [them] and do [them], for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the eyes of the nations, who will hear all these *chukim* (statutes) and say, "This great nation is a wise and understanding people." (4:6)

There are several different terms that the Torah uses to categorize the *mitzvos* (commandments). For example, there are *mishpatim* – laws which even if the Torah had not written them, it would have been logical to enact them – like the prohibitions of murder, stealing, and idolatry (Talmud Yoma 67b). There are also *chukim* – laws which we don't clearly understand the reasons for – like the prohibitions against consuming pork or wearing *shaatnez* (wool and linen garments). *Chukim*, our Sages teach us, will at times entice people of other nations to question our practices and sometimes even taunt us (See Rashi Bereishis 26:5 and Bamidbar 19:2). Our Parsha, however, appears to predict a very different kind of reaction from the other nations. "That is your wisdom and your understanding in the eyes of the peoples, who will hear all these *chukim* (statutes) and say, 'Only this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'" Apparently, when the nations hear of our *chukim*, they are expected to react with praise at the brilliance of the Jewish nation, not by challenging and taunting. How are we to reconcile these two conflicting perspectives?

The Ran (Derashos Haran 9) explains that the reaction described by the Sages is the initial reaction of the nations upon hearing of our *chukim* – challenge and ridicule. The verse in this week's Parsha, however, is assuring us that the ridicule will quickly turn to admiration. "For what great nation is there," the very next verse continues, "that has a god so near to them, as Hashem our G-d is whenever we call on him?" It is after witnessing the special connection the Jewish people have with Hashem, that the nations' taunting will transform to praise at the wisdom of the Torah's *chukim*. They will reason that it certainly can't be the logical statutes that create that special bond as they too have many of the same statutes yet don't have the same bond. It must be the *chukim* that engender our special relationship with Hashem.

Rav Reuven Feinstein *shlita* once shared an additional cause for the transformation of perspectives amongst the nations: *a Jew conducting himself or herself in the way of the Torah*. When the nations of the world see Jews behaving with dignity and respect, they will conclude that although the laws of the Torah do not make sense to them, their impact is undeniable. A system of laws that produces people of such elevated character is surely sourced in great wisdom.

The *mitzvos* of the Torah are much more than a system of laws; they are a path to perfection and intimate connection to Hashem. We should merit to appreciate the great opportunity to perform Hashem's *mitzvos* and become the people about whom the other nations say, "This great nation is a wise and understanding people."

Wishing you a Good Shabbos!

SPONSOR

To sponsor a Shabbos Delights, please contact info@gwckollel.org

TABLE TALK

Point to Ponder

You shall love Hashem, your G-d, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your possessions (6:5).

When the Romans were taking Rebbi Akiva to be killed, it was time to recite Krias Shema. While they combed his back with iron combs, he accepted the Yoke of Heaven (by reciting Shema). His students asked him, "Our master, must one endure so much?" Rebbi Akiva responded, "All my life I yearned to fulfill the command of the verse, 'with all your soul,' which means that even while one's life is being taken from him, he must accept upon himself Hashem's yoke. Now that it has come to my hand, I should not fulfill it?" (Brachos 61b)

Since the mitzvah of Krias Shema needs one's kavana / intent, and the mitzvah of giving up one's life for Hashem needs intent, how could Rebbi Akiva have intent on fulfilling these two mitzvos simultaneously?

Parsha Riddle

Besides for the gematria of "Va'eschanan," how do we know that Moshe davened 515 prayers to be permitted to enter Eretz Yisroel?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

When Moshiach comes, which three Yomim Tovim will we celebrate?

Answer: Chanukah, Purim and Tisha B'Av

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

In *parashas Va'eschanan* (4:9-10), Hashem commands:

Only beware for yourself and greatly beware for your soul, lest you forget the things that your eyes have beheld and lest you remove them from your heart all the days of your life ... the day that you stood before Hashem, your G-d, at Horeb, when Hashem said to me, "Gather the people to Me and I shall let them hear My words ..."

The Mishnah in *Pirkei Avos* (chapter 3) understands this as an exhortation not to forget the Torah that one has learned:

Whoever forgets anything of his Torah learning, Scripture considers it as if he bears guilt for his soul, for it is said "Only beware ..." Does this apply even if [he forgot because] his studies were too difficult for him? [This is not so, for] Scripture says, "and lest you remove them ..." Thus, one does not bear guilt for his soul unless he sits [idly] and [through lack of concentration and review] removes them from his consciousness.

The Rambam (*Rotzeach* 11:4), however, interprets the verse as referring to **physical** danger:

[I]t is a positive mitzvah to remove any obstacle that could pose a danger to life, and to be very careful regarding these matters, as it states: "Only beware for yourself and greatly beware for your soul."

This interpretation of the verse is actually mentioned in the Talmud – although it is attributed there to a presumably non-Jewish "officer," and not to the sages of the Talmud themselves (*Berachos* 32b).

The *Noda be-Yehudah* (2:YD:10) cites another verse from *parashas Va'eschanan* (4:15) as constituting a prohibition against self-endangerment:

But you shall greatly beware for your souls, for you did not see any likeness on the day Hashem spoke to you at Horeb, from the midst of the fire.

The *Noda be-Yehudah* accordingly forbids recreational hunting on the grounds of the activity's dangerousness:

For all those who are involved in this must enter forests and take great risks, in a place of bands of wild beasts, and the Torah states: "But you shall greatly beware for your souls" ...

PRESENTED BY

RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I?

1. I equal 611.
2. I equal all.
3. I am black, yet blue print.
4. Pass me on.

#2 WHO AM I?

1. Three times a day.
2. You cover for me.
3. Twelve said me to their elder.
4. I am listen.

Last Week's Answers

#1 Half of the Tribe of Menashe (I didn't get what I asked for, I am a half, I am on the other side, I am an add on.)

#2 Devarim (I am the last, Almost one day, Words, After last week's.)

KOLLEL BULLETIN BOARD

**Do you love the Shabbos Delights?
Please consider being a sponsor!**

To sponsor an issue of Shabbos Delights for \$54 please contact info@gwckollel.org