



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT" L

Follow the Signs

Presented by Rabbi Moshe Sadwin, Kollel Adjunct

“Prepare for yourself the way... so that the murderer can find refuge.” (19:3)

Our Parsha discusses the laws of *Arei Miklat* – the designated cities to which the unintentional murderer runs to seek refuge. Rashi explains that the instruction to “prepare for yourself the way” included a requirement to erect road signs directing people to the nearest *Ir Miklat*.

Remarkably, we don’t find such a requirement regarding other travels. The Jewish people have an obligation to visit Yerushalayim three times a year on the holidays of Pesach, Shavuos, and Sukkos. One would think that there should be a requirement to make signs directing the masses on the correct route to Yerushalayim, but we find no such consideration.

Rav Yerucham Levovitz suggests that the Torah specifically does not mandate signs to Yerushalayim. The Torah would prefer that the travelers ask around from the local residents to direct them to Yerushalayim. This would promote engagement with other people about the precious Mitzvah of traveling to Yerushalayim for the holidays and generate a culture of excitement for others to partake as well.

Regarding an unintentional murderer seeking directions to an *Ir Miklat*, however, the Torah does not want to create a commotion about a murder. The Torah wishes that it should not become public discussion. Therefore, the signs and directions are posted so that there will be no need for the murderer to engage with anyone else.

We can learn a tremendous lesson from this. Simple discussion of a murder or other wrongdoing can negatively impact our worldview. We do not want it to even be a topic of conversation, even as a passing reference. Conversely, regarding Mitzvos, the opposite is true. We want there to be conversation and commotion around Mitzvah observance as that will likely inspire others to raise their own level of performance. What we see, what we hear, and what we talk about have a profound effect on ourselves and our values.

Wishing you a Good Shabbos!

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TABLE TALK

Point to Ponder

Or who will come with his fellow into the forest... (19:5)

Rebbi Yehuda says, a blind person who kills someone accidentally does not go into exile. The reason is since the verse says (Bamidbar 35:23) "without seeing" and a blind person never sees (Makkos 9b).

Rebbi Yehuda says, a blind person is exempt from all the mitzvos of the Torah (Kiddushin 31a).

If a blind person is exempt from the mitzvos anyway, he would not be obligated to go into exile either. So why does Rebbi Yehuda need a special inference from a separate verse to teach that?

What is the connection between an unworthy judge and an Asheira tree?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

Why does the Torah juxtapose the prohibition of cooking meat and milk with the command to take ma'aser/tithes?

Answer: If one does not tithes his produce, Hashem will cook (cause a disease to destroy) the goat (the kernels of wheat) in the mother's milk (while it is still in the stalk) (Rashi).

HATORAH V' HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

In *parashas Shoftim*, after forbidding various occult practices, the Torah commands: "You shall be wholehearted with Hashem, your G-d" (18:13). *Tosafos (Shabbas 156b s.v. Chalda'i)* cites the *Sifrei* as ruling that this verse forbids resolving questions via the drawing. Various authorities explain that this refers only to attempts to divine future events by the drawing of lots, but it is permitted to utilize lots to allocate scarce resources between various claimants (*ha-Elef Lecha Shlomo OC 62, Shevet ha-Levi 7:16:6*).

The *Yalkut Shimoni*, however, declares that it is permitted to "seek counsel from the Torah" (*Mishlei 960*), and some understand this to refer to bibliomancy ("the use of [sacred] books in divination"). The *Erech Lechem (YD 179:4)* rules that it is permitted "to open the Torah to see which verse comes up, since (the Torah) is our life." The Chida suggests that this is included in "seeking counsel from the Torah," and he cites the author of the *Shevet Mussar* as condoning the practice (*Shiurei Brachah ibid. os 6*). Elsewhere, he records having observed "senior rabbis" having engaged in bibliomancy in situations of distress (*Chaim Sha'al 2:38:41*, and cf. *Ma'agal Tov [5704] p. 70* and *Shem ha-Gedolim ma'areches gedolim os Nun #14*).

More recently, the practice of bibliomancy has acquired the name of "*goral ha-Gra* (the Gra's lottery)," although to the best of this author's knowledge, there is no known connection between it and the Gra (the Gaon of Vilna). There are a number of twentieth-century accounts of various prominent rabbinic figures having engaged in the practice to resolve difficult dilemmas, although these are generally anecdotal and lacking authoritative sources. According to one report, R. Chaim Kanievsky cited his father (the Steipler) as having been opposed to the practice of the *goral ha-Gra* on two grounds: we do not know precisely how to perform it, and it is not proper to rely on lotteries, as per the admonition to be wholehearted with Hashem (*Orchos Rabbeinu 1 p. 218*). Another source, however, claims that: In the past years, R' Chaim has performed lotteries a number of times, in order to decide regarding various important matters wherein both available options seemed to be equally correct. ... The manner of the lottery is according to the instruction he received from his father the Steipler. (*Divrei Siach*, Vol. 1 Issue 22, *Pinchas*)

PRESENTED BY

RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I?

1. We must be two.
2. We can't be related.
3. We must be questioned.
4. In Shema I am large.

#2 WHO AM I?

1. I am a new house.
2. I am a new vineyard.
3. I am a new wife.
4. I am afraid.

Last Week's Answers

#1 Blessings on Har Grizim (To observe, My place was not greasy, I was given toward the sunset, I am not near your Morah..)

#2 Maaser (I'm an investment, I am every tenth, I have many types, Richness is my result.)

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