



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT" L

The Key Ingredient

Presented by Rabbi Zacharia Schwartz, Kollel Adjunct

"...for I said, 'Only there is no fear of G-d in this place...'" (20:11)

In this week's Parsha, Avimelech the king of G'rar attempts to take Sarah as his wife, based on Avraham's claim that she is his sister, not his wife. Once again, Hashem prevents this from happening and Avimelech returns Sarah to Avraham in short order. Avimelech, however, does not simply return Sarah and move on, rather he lodges a series of complaints with Avraham as to why Avraham did not tell Avimelech the truth from the start. *Did Avraham not see that G'rar was an ethical city that respected the rule of law? Why should he be afraid to tell them that Sarah was his wife? Sure, in Egypt this was reasonable, as the Egyptians were depraved and immoral and would not hesitate to kill Avraham to take his wife, but G'rar?* To this Avraham answered that despite how wonderful G'rar may have been, they were missing one thing – fear of G-d. The Malbim explains that as ethical and law-abiding as a person or society may be, all it takes is the right motivation, and the mind will rationalize why ethics and the law allow, even dictate that the worst of acts be done. Only a person or society anchored by fear of G-d can be relied upon to act justly on a consistent basis.

In our own time, we see all too clearly how the "best and the brightest" – those who pride themselves on their superior ethics and morality can succumb to double standards and support true evil even when it is displayed openly. Let us always remember how truly privileged we are to have the Torah as our moral anchor and may we always allow ourselves to be guided by its light.

Wishing you a Good Shabbos!

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TABLE TALK

Point to Ponder

"Let some water be brought..." (18:4)

"...by means of a messenger. And so Hashem sent B'nei Yisrael water in the desert through a messenger, which resulted in a tragedy" (Rashi).

Avraham sent Yishmael to prepare the calf for the guests to teach him the mitzvah of Hachnosas Orchim (Rashi 18:7).

It is reasonable to assume that he sent Yishmael to fetch water for the same reason. If so, why did Hashem punish B'nei Yisrael?

Parsha Riddle

Why were there specifically eighteen blessings in Shemoneh Esrei (before the nineteenth was added)?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

A person should first tie his left shoe, and then the right shoe (Orach Chaim 2:4). Where in this week's parsha is there a source for this halacha?

Answer: We merited the mitzvah of Tefillin because Avraham said, "To a shoelace" (Lech L'cha 14, 23). Since we tie the Tefillin on the left hand, we tie our left shoe first (Meshech Chochmo).

HATORAH V' HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

In *parashas Vayeira*, when the people of Sodom demand that Lot hand over his guests to them, he attempts to appease the mob by offering them his two daughters instead (19:4-8). While some commentators view Lot's offer as a symptom of his depravity (*Tanchuma* 12, Ramban), others justify the offer as an application of the "lesser of two evils principle" (Ralbag, and cf. Abarbanel).

The *halachah* does not generally allow handing people over to hostile actors even when doing so is clearly the lesser of two evils. The Mishnah states:

[If] gentiles say to women, "Give us one of you that we may defile her, and if not, we will defile you all," then let them all be defiled rather than hand over to them one soul from Israel (*Terumos* 8:12).

The Tosefta sets forth a similar rule, but adds a major qualification:

A group of [Jews] to whom gentiles say, "Give us one of you and we shall kill him, and if not, behold, we will kill all of them"; they should let themselves be killed and not deliver them one soul from Israel. But if they designated [the person] to them – for example, Sheva ben Bichri – they should give him to them and not let themselves be killed (*Ibid.* end of Chapter 7).

The Yerushalmi records a dispute over the nature of the Sheva ben Bichri dispensation:

R. Shimon ben Lakish said, on condition that he be guilty of a capital crime like Sheva ben Bichri; but R. Yochanan said, even if he is not guilty of a capital crime like Sheva ben Bichri (*Ibid.* 8:4).

While medieval authorities apparently disagree over whether the *halachah* is like R. Shimon ben Lakish or R. Yochanan (see *Ran Yoma* 4a, Rambam *Yosedei ha-Torah* 5:5), later authorities adopt the stringent view of the former (*Bach YD* 157, *Beis Hillel ibid.* os 5).

According to the stringent view, while some maintain that "guilty of a capital crime like Sheva ben Bichri" means guilty according to Torah law (Meiri, cited by *Sheyarei Keneses ha-Gedolah ibid.* BY 39), most authorities understand that guilt according to non-Jewish law is sufficient, at least insofar as the guilty individual can be deemed to have caused his predicament and can be considered a "pursuer" (*rodef*), who may be sacrificed to save others (*Shut. Bach [yeshanos]* 43, *Beis Hillel ibid.*).

PRESENTED BY
RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I?

1. We were three.
2. It was not Purim, yet we did v'nahapoch hu.
3. We were not comedians, yet we caused laughter.
4. We ate, as is the custom.

#2 WHO AM I?

1. I am the final exam.
2. In the end I was rammed.
3. I caused death.
4. My reminder is not your chauffeur.

Last Week's Answers

#1 Bris Milah (I was for 99, I was for 13, I am for 8, I need a northern wind.)

#2 Bris Bein Habesarim (Covenant Between the Parts) (Cut in half, I attracted the birds, I caused sleep, Revealing.)

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M'ELIYAHU**

Thought and
Perspective of
Rav Eliyahu
Dessler

