



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT"l

To Merit the Miraculous

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

Three days after his circumcision, Avraham waited outside in the heat, hoping to welcome a passerby into his tent. When three angels, disguised as men, arrived, Avraham hurried to invite them in and offered them food and water. With the help of Sarah and Yishmael, he prepared a lavish meal for his guests. The Talmud (Bava Metziah 86b) teaches us that for every action that Avraham performed himself for the angels, his descendants merited a direct provision from G-d, while those actions Avraham accomplished through a messenger, his descendants merited a corresponding provision through a messenger. Consequently, because Avraham provided the foodstuffs himself, the Jewish nation merited to receive *slav* meat and manna directly from G-d when they traveled through the desert. Because Avraham sent a messenger to retrieve the water, the Jewish people only merited to receive their water in the dessert through a messenger, i.e. the Well of Miriam. Notably, in both cases, Avraham's actions were rewarded with a miracle performed for his offspring.

This passage requires further explanation. Avraham Avinu was famous for his hospitality. He certainly welcomed guests countless times before this episode. Presumably, for some of those times, he fetched the water himself and for some of those times he sent a messenger to retrieve the food. Why only now did he merit unique rewards for his offspring?

Rav Yosef Salant explains that simply welcoming guests and providing hospitality, while certainly praiseworthy, does not warrant miracles. Rather, it is when a person pushes themselves beyond what is natural for a human being – defying the laws of nature, so to speak – then G-d responds in kind and defies the laws of nature on their behalf. Avraham was ninety-nine years old, weak and in pain from his recent circumcision, and it was a boiling hot day. Nevertheless, he waited outside desperately hoping that a potential guest would pass by. When he saw the three angels, even though he believed they were ordinary men, he ran to invite them and convince them to stay. This was followed by a flurry of activity to prepare a feast for them. In his eagerness to provide for others, Avraham was able to forget his own pain and weakness and accomplish something that shouldn't have been humanly possible under the circumstances. It is for acts like these – acts that go beyond the laws of nature – that a person can merit miracles for themselves or their descendants.

Each of us will be faced with an opportunity to perform a *mitzvah* that we think is impossible under the circumstances. If we can find the inner strength to persevere and push past those obstructions, we may just find ourselves doing the impossible. Then we too can merit, G-d willing, to see miracles for us and our people.

Wishing you a Good Shabbos!

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TABLE TALK

Point to Ponder

Hashem appeared to him in the plains of Mamre... (18:1)

He (Mamre) is the one who Avraham asked if he should follow Hashem's command regarding circumcising himself. Mamre encouraged Avraham to fulfill the command. (Rashi)

Hashem commanded Avraham to circumcise himself. Was there any doubt in Avraham's mind whether to execute the command? If Mamre had told Avraham not to circumcise himself, would Avraham have listened to him? So why did Avraham ask him?

Parsha Riddle

Which three aspects of the mitzvah of Hachnasas Orchim (having guests) are derived from one word in this parsha?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

Why should Yitzchak be named Yitzchak?

Answer: 1) Since Avraham laughed when he heard he would have a son. 2) Yud = 10 for ten tests that Avraham passed. Tzadi = 90 for Sarah's age when Yitzchak was born. Ches = 8 since he received his bris at 8 days. Kuf = 100 for Avraham's age when Yitzchak was born. (Rashi)

HATORAH V' HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

In *parashas Vayeira* (18:20), the Torah states:

So Hashem said, "Because the outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah has become great, and because their sin has been very grave, I will descend and see: If they act in accordance with its outcry which has come to Me – then destruction! And if not, I will know."

In *Yechezkel* (16:49), the Torah characterizes the sin of Sodom as follows:

Behold, this was the sin of Sodom, your sister: She and her daughters had pride, surfeit of bread and peaceful serenity, but she did not strengthen the hand of the poor and the needy.

Our tradition understands that the root of the evil of the Sodomites was their extreme selfishness; even the unspeakable atrocities that they committed were motivated by this selfishness. The Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 109a-b) states:

The people of Sodom **said: Since we live in a land from which bread comes and has the dust of gold, we have everything that we need. Why do we need travelers, as they come only to divest us of our property? Come, let us cause the proper treatment of travelers to be forgotten from our land ...**

There was a young woman who would take bread out to the poor people in a pitcher so the people of Sodom would not see it. The matter was revealed, and they smeared her with honey and positioned her on the wall of the city, and the hornets came and consumed her. And that is the meaning of that which is written: "So Hashem said, "Because the outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah has become great [rabba]." And Rav Yehuda says that Rav says: Rabba is an allusion to the matter of the young woman [riva] who was killed for her act of kindness.

R. Yeruchom Levovitz (d. 1936) warned against the modern emulation of Sodom:

Like America of today was the America of that time (i.e., Sodom), its doors entirely shut, and why? Because there was great abundance there and much business, and everyone ran there ... so they enacted an immigration law ... This is truly the characteristic of Sodom; this derives from the degradation of man. ... And who knows, perhaps it is because of this villainy, that they shut their doors against guests, that they arrived at the great crisis that prevails today in the entire world, for that was the sin of their sister Sodom and its enormous punishment. (*Da'as Torah, Vayeira*, pp. 128-29)

PRESENTED BY

RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I?

1. Blow to remember.
2. In a bind.
3. I caused blindness.
4. I am the tenth (according to some).

#2 WHO AM I?

1. I made people laugh.
2. I am the second.
3. Mincha is mine.
4. Korban

Last Week's Answers

#1 Yud at the end of Sara! (I was her last, I became his first, I was replaced by five less, My departure preceded the son.)

#2 Bris Mila (I am for the eighth, I allow Shabbos transgression, Don't take four skins, I make one complete.)

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