



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

# SHABBOS DELIGHTS

## TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT"l

### **Bringing Out the Best**

**Presented by Rabbi Hillel Shaps, Director**

#### **Yaakov was very afraid and he was distressed... (32:8)**

When Yaakov hears that his brother, Esav, is approaching with four-hundred men, he becomes afraid. The Midrash (Bereishis Rabba 76:2) explains that despite Yaakov's piety, he still feared that Esav might overcome him because of two merits that Esav possessed but Yaakov lacked. Firstly, for the last twenty-plus years, Esav had been dwelling in the Land of Israel while Yaakov had not. Secondly, while Yaakov was away, Esav had continued to be engaged in honoring his parents, while Yaakov could not be.

Our Sages teach us that Esav was guilty of the worst of sins; Yaakov, on the other hand, was the epitome of piety. Why would Yaakov be concerned over two merits that Esav had, that he did not?

Rav Yaakov Niman (Darchei Mussar) suggests that Yaakov, in this case, was exercising his extreme humility and exemplifying the character trait identified by the Ramban in his famous letter (Iggeres HaRamban) to his son: "In everyone that you meet, find a positive trait that you don't have and then humble yourself before them." A person of elevated character like Yaakov is never satisfied with what they have accomplished; they never become complacent and assume that they've already "made it." Yet, when looking at others, they take note – not of their shortcomings, but of their successes and accomplishments. In his constant pursuit of perfection, Yaakov's attention was immediately drawn to Esav's most positive traits and in Yaakov's humility, led him to question if his own merits could truly outweigh those of Esav. This left him fearful and moved him to take all necessary precautions.

Every person we encounter has something positive for us to learn from. Rather than focusing on the shortcomings of others, if we find those positive traits, it will not only improve our relationships, but also propel us forward in our own personal journey towards perfection.

**Wishing you a Good Shabbos!**

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## TABLE TALK

### Point to Ponder

**Then he (the angel) said, "Let me go, for dawn has broken." (32:27).**

The angel told Yaakov, "I am an angel and from the day I was created until today I have not sung praise to Hashem until this morning" (Chulin 91b).

What prompted the angel to sing praise to Hashem this day? Rav Chaim Volozhiner explained that an angel is not permitted to sing praise to Hashem until he has fulfilled his mission. Since the angel of Esav had fulfilled his task, he was able to sing praise to Hashem.

In truth, the angel lost his struggle with Yaakov (32:29). If so, why is it considered as if he had fulfilled his mission?

### Parsha Riddle

**How does this parsha help us determine the age for Bar Mitzvah?**

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

**In which two places in this week's parsha do we see the power of prayer?**

**Answer: 1) Leah davened that she should not marry Esav. 2) Leah davened that her fetus, which was destined to be a boy, should become a girl (although generally speaking, we are not supposed to daven for miracles of this sort). The purpose of her request was in order that Rachel should have two boys.**

## HATORAH V' HAMITZVAH

### HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

In *parashas Vayishlach* (35:16-20), the Torah relates:

They [Yaakov and his family] journeyed from Beth-el and there was still a stretch of land (*kivras erez*) to go to Ephrath, when Rachel went into labor and had difficulty in her childbirth. ... And Rachel died, and was buried on the road to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem. Yaakov set up a monument over her grave; it is the monument of Rachel's grave until today.

The commentaries disagree over the location of Rachel's death and burial. Some understand that the phrase "*kivras erez*" denotes a substantial distance, which implies that Rachel's grave is a substantial distance from Bethlehem, whereas others maintain that the phrase denotes a minimal distance, which implies that the grave is quite close to Bethlehem. This latter group includes Ramban, who retracted his earlier endorsement of the former view upon emigrating to the Land of Israel and observing "with [his] own eyes" that the site of Rachel's Tomb was less than a *mil* (somewhat less than a modern mile) from Bethlehem (Ramban *ibid.*).

There is considerable *halachic* discussion of the permissibility of *kohanim* visiting the graves of the righteous in general, and Rachel's Tomb in particular. While there are some opinions that the graves of the righteous, or at least of certain superlatively righteous individuals, do not convey ritual impurity and thus may be visited by *kohanim* (see *Tosafos Kesubos* 103b. s.v. *Oso ha-Yom*, Ramban *Bamidbar* 19:2), the preponderance of *halachic* authority does not follow this view (see *Tzitz Eliezer* 15:68).

Others have considered whether those who lived before the giving of the Torah, including even the Patriarchs and Matriarchs, have the status of Jews or non-Jews, and while it might seem odd to not consider such illustrious figures to have been Jewish, this technical consideration could potentially serve as grounds for leniency with respect to *kohanim* visiting sites such as Rachel's Tomb and the Cave of the Patriarchs (*Me-aras ha-Machpelah*). Once again, however, the preponderance of *halachic* authority does not accept this leniency (see *Zayis Ra'anan* YD 26).

An additional consideration with respect to Rachel's Tomb in particular is a rumor that the current structure was built in a manner that would permit the entry of *kohanim* therein; a discussion of the details, provenance, and reliability of this claim is beyond the scope of this article (see *Tzitz Eliezer ibid.*).

PRESENTED BY

RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

## KIDS KORNER

### Who Am I?

#### #1 WHO AM I?

1. We were equal to the "double's" purchase.
2. We caused division.
3. We were the 'Red army'.
4. We instilled fear.

#### #2 WHO AM I?

1. I am not a sin for you rather a...
2. I am a limping prohibition.
3. I was an angelic grip.
4. The sun was my remedy.

#### Last Week's Answers

**#1 The word "Vayifga" (28:11)** (I could be meet, I could be pray, I hint to quick travel, I referenced Yaakov's Maariv.)

**#2 Leah** (I was the older, I was a weeper, I had half, I was soft eyed.)

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