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Yesodos m' ha Sedra

LESSONS IN HASHKAFA & HALACHA FROM THE PARSHA

In memory of R' Shmuel Shmelka ben HaRav Moshe Kizelnik z"l



From the desk of the Rosh Kollel…

Welcome to all our new subscribers!

Winter z'man is well underway and the energy in the beis medrash is palpable and the ruach is positively exciting!

This year, the Yesodos will feature the "Seven Uppers", which will recount and summarize each of the seven aliyah's, integrating inspiration and lessons in hashkafa at each juncture. We hope you enjoy this new twist.

In Elul, the kollel began our 18th year! Since its inception, the kollel has impacted many people from all walks of life; from the avreichim, to the local baalei batim, and neighborhood youth. Thank you to all those who have supported us on this journey. To find out how to make a good thing even better, email us at info@torahkollel.com

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- Rabbi Dovid Lewin

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וירא

תשפ"ז

"SEVEN UPPERS"

(*Kohein*) As Avraham is healing from his bris milah, he sits by the door of his tent on the lookout for passersby, so he could continue his life's work of hachnasas orchim and bringing others closer to the service of Hashem. Since he was really exempt because of his pain, Hakadosh Boruch Hu brought on a heatwave to keep everyone indoors. This bothered Avraham tremendously so Hashem sent three travelers who were really malachim to visit.

R' Moshe Feinstein explains that really, Avraham could have davened for a complete and speedy recovery, but he wanted to heal naturally, like the way Hashem designed the world. On the other hand, he knew that not davening for a speedy recovery might come at the expense of his guests, since he wouldn't be able to serve them properly, and so he sat at the door of his tent ready to welcome people as he did before with the added benefit of doing so with great pain and difficulty.

Avraham welcomed the three malachim and fed them meat and butter. The medrash says that ultimately, the fact that they consumed the two together prevented the malachim from keeping the Torah in shomayim and not giving it to the Jewish people.

They informed Avraham that Sarah would have a child within the year and she laughed when she overheard. R' Eliyahu Meir Bloch explains that although she saw that miraculously, her body had already taken on new life, she didn't think that it was possible for Avraham to become young enough again to father a child. Although Avraham was ninety-nine years old and wouldn't have taken offense to his wife just thinking that he was old, when Hashem reported this to Avraham, he changed the story, saying that Sarah wondered about herself. This teaches us how sensitive and careful we must be so as not to slight someone else's feelings.

(*Levi*) After the three guests take leave of Avraham and two of them head towards Sedom, Hashem 'decides' to tell Avraham about His plans to destroy Sedom because "Avraham impacts nations AND will command his children to follow in his ways". R' Eliyahu Meir Bloch explains that working for the k'lal is great but it is only great if a he also attends to his family's spiritual growth.

Avraham did not want to see a city destroyed, and so he proceeded to 'bargain' with Hashem to save it. Rav Shimon Schwab zt"l notes that Avraham wasn't asking Hashem to find fifty tzadikim gemurim in Sedom; he specifically said 'chamishim b'toch ha'ir" - fifty inside the city, meaning that if they were righteous only in comparison to the rest of Sedom's residents. Unfortunately, they were all equally evil and so Avraham did not succeed in get Hashem to 'change His mind'.

(*Shlishi*) When the malachim arrived in Sedom to destroy the city and save Lot and his family, Lot violated local bylaws by inviting these strangers in. The

city's residents and leaders were upset by this and ordered Lot to turn over his guests. In response, Lot offered to give them his daughters instead. Although Lot saw Avraham's tremendous mesirus nefesh for the mitzva of hachnasas orchim, Avraham did so in order to emulate Hashem. Lot was merely following the customs he had learned in Avraham Avinu's house, with no understanding of their purpose and deeper meaning behind them.

"Minhag Yisroel Torah", and Jewish customs are rooted in sacred sources. However, we must not lose sight of the reasons why we observe them, or for that matter, fulfill any of the mitzvos. Torah and mitzvos are meant to change us. This is the way of Avraham Avinu. Keeping old customs because they are traditional, or doing mitzvos out of rote can lead to acting ludicrous, just as was the case with Lot.

(*Revi'i*) After Lot and his family are escorted out of Sedom, Hashem destroys the city completely. The Chofetz Chaim notes that in many ways this was a greater punishment than the mabul or dor haflagah, because although the latter two sinned greatly and severely, Sedom legislated a ban on hachnasas orchim and helping other people.

Lot's wife was warned not to turn around and look back but she didn't listen and turned into a pillar of salt. His daughters thought that the whole the world had been destroyed, understood that they only way to rebuild was if Lot would father their children and so they gave him wine and he became intoxicated. Since their intentions were pure, we are warned against fighting and oppressing their descendants - the nations of Moav and Amon.

When Avraham traveled south to Gerar, he introduced Avimelech as his sister. Although before doing the same when traveling to Mitzrayim Avraham asked Sarah to always pretend they are brother and sister, Rashi here tells is that this time, he didn't ask and did so against her will. Perhaps this was because she ended up being taken into Pharoah's palace and was no longer so willing to go along with it.

The Netziv explains that since these journeys were ones which Avraham embarked on, on his own volition, he had to make hishtadlus for safety because Hashem's guarantee that he would protect him was only if Hashem expressly told him to do so.

Just as Hashem had promised, Sarah became pregnant and gave birth to a son, which they named Yitzchok, which most understand has to do with the word 'tzchok' - laughter, either because of Sarah's initial reaction, or because of the laughter of celebration of Avraham and Sarah's new baby. The medrash however, explains that the name Yitzchok is a contraction of "yatza chok" which the Netziv explains to mean that new rules for parnasa have been established. This is because a Jew's livelihood very much defies nature, in the same way that and elderly couple, Avraham and Sarah (who was also physically deficient) were able to produce a child.

(*Chamishi*) When Sarah finished nursing Yitzchok, Avraham hosted a large celebration which was attended by tzadikim. The Taz notes that although in Megilas Esther we find that "mishteh gadol" means a lot of food and drink, that seudah was hosted by Achashveirosh to celebrate what he believed to be a sign of the downfall of Jewish people. Avraham's intentions were quite the opposite and so these words carry a more important connotation.

Sarah feared that Yishmael would be a bad influence on Yitzchok and she asked Avraham to send him and Hagar away. Although this was difficult for Avraham, ultimately he followed her advice after Hashem told him to listen to Sarah's intuition. Hagar filled up on water for the journey and the medrash criticizes her for taking extra water for the journey in the desert. R' Leib Chasman compares this to someone who accompanies a king on a journey and takes along snacks and food for the journey instead of understanding that the king will take care of his needs. So too, Hagar who was familiar with malachim should have realized that Hashem will provide for them. We too, he explains, travel through life with Hashem Who takes care of everything we need and there is no reason to worry.

(*Shishi*) When Avimelech saw Hashem's promises to Avraham come to fruition, he wanted to ensure that his descendants would be able to remain on their land and so he summoned Avraham and after settling the matter of returning the wellsprings that Avimelech's servants had stolen from him, Avraham made a covenant with Avimelech as requested. This is the first recorded shevua (oath) in the history of the world. The Rabeinu Bachaya explains that Avraham used seven sheep as a sign for his promise wasn't coincidental as the root of shevua (oath) is sheva (seven) because according to kabbalah, it relates to the extremities of the physical and spiritual worlds and His holy name.

(*Shevi'i*) Avraham's biggest test was the akeidas Yitzchok. If we understand that Yitzchok was thirty-seven at the time and really understood what was about to happen to him, we would think that it should be referred to as Yitzchok's greatest nisayon. R' Shlomo Gantzfried explains that each big event of the avos was the conquering of a new frontier. We, as their descendants, are able to withstand similar difficulties because it is built into our spiritual DNA. The willingness to die al kiddush Hashem was already established by Avraham when he was thrown into a burning furnace, and Yitzchak was able to draw his strength from there. However, the willingness to sacrifice one's one and only child for Hashem was something new and was a nisayon for Avraham, not Yitzchok. He passed the test and perhaps in many ways we draw upon this spiritual accomplishment to enable us to sacrifice that which is important to us, for Hashem.

The parsha ends by telling us of the genealogy of the children of Nachor, Avraham's brother, and culminates in the birth of Rivka. Rashi comments that the Torah records the entire family tree, just because of Rivka. On the surface this means that the Torah wanted to fill us in on the details but R' Moshe Feinstein explains that twelve nations were born just so that their descendants would one day help and service the descendants of Rivka. This not only teaches us how great Rivka was, but that all developments and technology produces by the umos ha'olam are ultimately intended to service K'lal Yisroel in the service of Hashem.

MELECHES KOTZER & M'AMEIR

After the herbs etc. that were used to dye the materials of the Mishkan had grown, they were harvested. This is known as the melacha of kotzeir and includes anytime one removes a growing item from its source of life and growth. The av melacha is defined as accomplishing this by using a tool such as a sickle. If one harvest by hand, he has violated a toldah of kotzeir (which, as we have previously explained is also a Torah violation). Even if one harvest something by plucking it with his mouth, he has violated a toldah of kotzeir, although this might be considered a shinui and will therefore be exempt (see Mishna Berura and Shaar Hatziyun 336:49). Often, shaking a tree in order that it sheds its fruits is a normal method of harvest (such as often is the case with olives) and doing so also violates a toldah of kotzeir.

Chazal tell us that if a plant in a pot is sitting on the ground, it may very well be considered connected to the ground, if there are holes at the bottom of the pot. Accordingly, if one lifts up such a pot off the ground - whether he takes it indoors, or simply raises it and further separates it from the ground - he is in violation of kotzeir. This is true even there was already a gap and he just lifted it further away from the ground or inserted an item between it and the ground, thereby breaking its 'connection' to the ground.

In order to be liable (for a korban) for doing any melacha, one must do a certain minimal shiur (measurement) of the melacha. When it comes to kotzeir, it depends on the reason why he is harvesting the item: If he intends to eat it, the shiur is a k'grogeres (a dried fig). If it is to feed his animals, then it is subjective to the item and and what type of animal it is fit for. If one breaks off branches to use as firewood, the shiur is enough wood to burn in order to fry a (gi-sized portion of) egg.

Many classify removing a live fish from water as a toldah of kotzeir since it disconnects it from its life source. Chazal also view a honeycomb inside the hive as connected to its source and removing it is a violating of the melacha. However, once an item has been harvested, there is no problem with plucking its fruits. Therefore, one may pluck grapes off the cluster which was harvested before Shabbos.

In many cases, Chazal were concerned that through another otherwise innocuous activity, one might come to violate the melacha of kotzeir. Therefore, Chazal banned the eating of fruits which fell off a tree on Shabbos, or vegetables that became detached on their own, lest one be tempted to harvest more of them. They furthermore prohibited one from smelling fruit while it is attached to the tree, lest one be tempted to eat it. According to most opinions however, one is permitted to smell flowers while they are still growing as we are not concerned that he will pick the flowers and take them with him.

Chazal also banned using a tree even if the tree doesn't move. It is therefore forbidden to lean against a tree on Shabbos and certainly, climbing it is forbidden. One may also not hand something on a tree (such as hanging a jacket on a nature protrusion) and if it was hanging there, he may not remove it. One may also not lie in a hammock which is attached to a tree, or even remove clothes from a laundry line that is tied to a tree, even where there is no issue of muktza such as if the laundry was dry before Shabbos. However, Chazal did not ban "tzedadei tzedadim" - meaning that they permitted using something that is attached to something else that is attached to the tree, provided there is no movement. For example, if a solid iron bar is suspended between two trees and the chains or rope of a hammock is tied to that bar, one may lie in the hammock on Shabbos.

Any part of a tree or vegetation that is within three tefachim (aprox. 10 inches) of the ground is considered an extension

of the ground and one may therefore sit on a low tree stump on Shabbos, etc. Furthermore, one may walk on the grass, even if it is higher than three tefachim, since he is not using it, but this is provided he does not rush through it in a way that he will almost certainly uproot some of the grass.

Often, people riding on animals would use a branch from a tree to direct and steer their animals and Chazal were considered that one might break off a branch on Shabbos for this purpose and they therefore banned riding or using animals in any way on Shabbos. This not only includes riding in a carriage drawn by an animal, but even leaning on an animal or placing an item on it, similar to the prohibition of using a tree, as above, except that tzdadei tzedadim are also prohibited.

After the produce was harvested, it was bundled together. This is known as me'ameir. However, it is not the tying of the bundles but rather the gathering together into piles which is considered the melacha. Therefore, one who gathers fruits that are not typically tied, such as melons, violates the melacha of me'ameir. Some however, require tying the bundle together if they are fruits which are typically tied. The Ketzos Hashulchan explains that this is only in order to ensure that the melacha accomplished will last but a type of thing that does not need to be secured, does not need to be tied in order to transgress the melacha of me'ameir.

Me'ameir only applies to things that grow from the ground and usually (see further) only in a place where they grow. Therefore, one who gathers lego or toys in a backyard does not violate the melacha, and it is likewise permitted to gather apples inside the house. If a quantity of apples spills outside and rolls all over, (providing it is in an enclosed yard or there is an eruv) one should take one or two apples at a time inside and then go back out to get a couple more.

Attaching fruits together such as pressing dried figs into a 'cake' or stringing them together is a toldah of me'ameir. The Mishna Berura rules that this is true even if he does so indoors because this is the normal place to do this activity. Some say that gathering eggs from under the chickens (assuming they were laid before Shabbos for otherwise they are muktza) is also a toldah of me'ameir as animal are also considered gidulei karka.



RAV LAZER SHACH

16 Cheshvan 5762

R' Elazar Menachem Mann Shach was born in Vabolnik, Lithuania on erev Rosh Chodesh Shvat 5655 (1895). His father, R' Ezriel came from a family of businessmen who were yerei shomayim and his mother, Batsheva came from a long line of rabbonim.

Although there was a yeshiva in his hometown, out of a tremendous desire to completely immerse himself in Torah, he left his parents' home to go learn in the Ponevezh Yeshiva, and when he left, he was never to see his parents again.

He later went to learn in Slabodka tremendous hasmadah and became close to R' Yitzchok Blazer, and the Alter of Slabodka, R' Isaac Sher, and R' Moshe Mordechai Epstein. Mostly, Rav Shach viewed himself as a talmid of Slabodka and often referred to it as the 'mother of yeshivos', stating that it was the source from which all the Torah in Eretz Yisroel and America was built.

When World War I broke out in 1914, he was forced to leave Slabodka and he returned to Vabolnik and joined the yeshiva of the Divrei Yechezkel. From there he spent the war years wandering from town to town, secluding himself in shuls, devoting himself to the study of Torah under the most difficult circumstances, yet the words of Dovid Hamelech, "lulei Torascha sha'ashu'ai, as avadeti b'aniyi" (if I didn't have joy of Torah, I would have been lost in suffering) resonated with him.

Eventually, he joined the R' Isser Zalman Meltzer, who had started a yeshiva in Slutsk. R' Isser Zalman immediately recognized R' Lazer's greatness and the two became very close, and eventually, R' Lazer married R' Isser Zalman's niece and was appointed to be a magid shiur in the yeshiva.

Rav Shach often spoke of his rebbetzin's mesirus nefesh, which allowed him to toil in Torah undisturbed. She took upon herself the yoke of supporting the family, working as a pharmacist in the town. For five years after his marriage he devoted himself with tremendous hasmadah acquiring a mastery of all areas of Torah.

In 1929 he was asked by R' Aharon Kotler zt"l to assist him by becoming a maggid shiur in Kletsk. He taught Torah there for five years, leaving his mark on many talmidim, and it was then that he became close to R' Yechezkel Levenstein, the future mashgiach of Ponevezh.

He then spent a brief time in Lublin, and then two years in Novardok, before becoming a magid shiur and then rosh yeshiva in Karlin.

In 1940 R' Lazer came to Vilna, where he spent time with Rav Chaim Ozer discussing Torah, and learning from him about Jewish leadership. While he was in Vilna, his oldest daughter, Miriam Reizel, passed away at the age of 14. He later said that it was only the joy of Torah that got him through that difficult period.

The Shach's then moved to Eretz Yisroel. All his possessions were confiscated at the border and they were penniless, so he made his way to HaRav Isser Zalman Meltzer's home. He was offered a position as a magid shiur in a yeshiva in Tel Aviv and accepted it but later quit at the behest of the Chazon Ish who found issues with the hashkafos of the rosh yeshiva. He went on to serve as a magid shiur in yeshivos in Yerushalayim, Rechovot, and in Yeshiva Lomzhe in Petach Tikva and in 1951he was asked by the Ponevezher Rov zt"l to become Rosh Yeshiva of Ponevezh. There, for the next fifty year, he nurtured each talmid like a growing flower, and in addition to drawing and watering from the historical wellsprings of Slobodka, Brisk and Slutsk, he managed with a determined spirit to impart the legacy of his rabbonim to future generations.

R' Shach left a huge imprint on many thousands of talmidim and followers, who witnessed his derech in avodas Hashem, and learned about the means of acquiring Torah and pure yiras Shomayim. He was an oved Hashem whose whole being was dedicated to only one thing: serving Hashem with all his might, increasing kvod Shomayim, Torah, yiras Shomayim and mussar throughout Klal Yisroel.