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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 began last week with a bang 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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תשפ"ז

"SEVEN UPPERS"

(*Kohein*) When Hakadosh Boruch Hu tested Avraham Avinu by commanding him to leave his homeland and travel to Eretz Yisroel, Hashem promised him much beracha and hatzlacha. R' Shimshon Pinkus explains that the move itself should not have been too much of a test; after all, many people move to new places for employment purposes alone. Rather, Hashem wanted to see his reaction: Often when people have to move on to a new place it is with hesitation; they are attached to the place and life they are accustomed to. The Ribono shel Olam wanted to test Avraham's readiness to detach himself from his comfort zone in order to fulfill ratzon Hashem. This, explains R' Pinkus, is the primary test of every Jew - our readiness to leave our comfort zones of olam ha'zeh to pursue spiritual pursuits.

Because of the famine, Avraham Avinu was forced to leave Eretz Yisroel and travel to Mitzrayim, which according to most, Hashem was merely testing his full fait in the Ribono shel Olam who had brought him there and then forced him to leave. The Ramban however, understands that Avraham was supposed to remain in Eretz Yisroel despite the difficulties and by leaving, he actually failed the test.

(*Levi*) . Upon arrival in Mitzrayim, Avraham tells his wife Sarah to pretend they are brother and sister, so that the shouldn't kill him in order to marry her. After taking her into his palace, Hashem inflicts painful physical ailments on Pharoah and in a dream, informs him that she is a married woman. In the morning, Pharoah confronts Avraham and sends him off, and they leave without comment.

In parshas Vayeira, there is a similar story involving Avimelech, only there, when confronted, Avraham Avinu explains that he saw that the local residents lacked yiras shomayim, and so it behooves us to understand why Avraham didn't answer Pharoah.

R' Boruch Sorotzkin zt"l explains that when Avimelech confronted Avraham, his main complaint was that he had almost committed a sin. Even if we understand that he didn't have a tremendous amount of yiras shomayim, at the end of the day, he was concerned about what could have happened. Pharoah, on the other hand, was seemingly only concerned about his physical ailments but wasn't concerned that he might have been guilty of adultery. Such a complaint doesn't deserve a response. Sometimes one must answer a fool (Mishlei 26:5), and sometimes one should not (Mishlei 26:4).

(*Shlishi*) Avraham and Sarah returned to Eretz Yisroel, along with his

nephew Lot who had accompanied them the entire journey. At this point, Both Avraham and Lot had amassed large herds of cattle and flocks of sheep and a dispute broke out between their respective shepherds. The posuk tell us that "the land could not contain both groups together" and that there was a dispute between them, "and the Canaanim and Prizim were in the land then". Rashi explains that the space was limited and the land did not yet belong to Avraham, but was inhabited by other nations. Perhaps though, there is an important lesson in these words: In order to merit Eretz Yisroel, there has to be sholom between Jews. If there is machlokes, the land cannot tolerate it. Still, if we are living among other nations, especially in Eretz Yisroel, it is much worse.

So, Lot left and moved to Sedom which was a great place from a gashmius perspective, but was a depraved society with a warped legal system.

Now that Lot was gone, Hashem appeared to Avraham Avinu and promised to give his children the entire land.

(*Revii*) The Torah records the first war in history and that Lot was taken into captivity. When Avraham heard about it, he joined in the battle in order to free his nephew and ultimately help the five attacked nations defend themselves and win the war.

It is of note that the Torah records the source of Avraham's information: It was 'the palit' who came and told him that Lot was captured. Rashi tells us that this was none other than Og who had survived the mabul and lived until the times of Moshe Rabeinu, and in the eyes of Chazal it was for this good act that he merited such longevity. Yet, the medrash tells us that Og had an ulterior motive. He was hoping that Avraham would be killed in battle so that he could take Sarah as his wife. The Oznayim la'Torah notes that while Chazal tell us that one who give money to tzedaka in order that his child should live is considered a tzadik gamur, it really goes much further. Og had evil intentions, and yet was rewarded for playing a role in saving Lot.

(*Chamishi*) At this point, Avraham Avinu was childless and he was concerned who would take over his legacy. When he expressed this, the Ribono shel Olam assured him that he would have a child and took him outside and, pointing to the stars, he promised him that his children would be so great, just like the uncountable stars.

Chazal understand Hashem's command that Avraham should go outside to mean that he should also leave his astrological fate. Ultimately, Hashem would ass a letter to his name in order that he should have a different mazal. Even though the Ribono shel Olam could have given him children anyway, R' Moshe Feinstein explains that Hashem always tries to limit open miracles, even if it will only mean attributing the miraculous outcome to a name change.

(*Shishi*) After promising Avraham that his descendants would inherit Eretz Yisroel, Avraham asks for a sign that it is true. R' Moshe Feinstein explains that since acquiring Eretz Yisroel requires zechusim, there was no way that Hashem could have guaranteed that Avraham's children would actually be worthy of receiving the land. Still, Avraham is faulted for it has he should have understood that Hashem would conduct Himself with chesed and rachamim and fulfill his promise even if we would be undeserving.

Hakadosh Boruch Hu responds with the 'bris bein ha'besarim' and by telling him that his children will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, which R' Shlomo Gantzfried explains was actually encouraging because when someone is in a strange place, even if they are on vacation, they can't wait to get home. So too, k'lal Yisroel will always have Eretz Yisroel in their mind, vying to return home.

After many years of marriage, Sarah gives up on having a child and decides to give her maidservant Hagar to Avraham for the purpose of procreation. After Hagar conceived immediately, she was no longer willing to serve Sarah as her master and she fled. A malach approached her and told her to 'return to Sarah and be afflicted by her', which seems a bit wordy. The Sefer Be'er Yosef explains that the angel was attempting to convey a specific message to Hagar: "You think that Sarah is the source of your misery and oppression. You must realize however that it has been divinely ordained that you suffer. Running away from your problems is not going to solve them, but will only create different ones. If your affliction is inevitable, then you might as well return and suffer under a tzadeikes like Sarah instead of someone else who might be less compassionate or more unpleasant to serve."

(*Shevi'i*) After changing Avram's name to Avraham, Hashem commands him to circumcise himself and his entire household. Hakadosh Boruch then changes Sarah's name as well (as until then, she was called Sarai), promising Avraham that he would build a nation directly through her, and not through Hagar.

The parsha ends with the bris milah of Avraham, Yishmael, and all of Avraham's servants. The Chidah writes that the circumcisions took place on Yom Kippur and that every Yom Kippur, Hashem recalls Avraham's act of mesirus nefesh as a merit for his children. Chazal tell us that there were thirteen 'brisos' which transfers to every single bris milah. The Sefas Emes explains that these correspond to the thirteen midos of rachamim and so every bris milah is a time of tremendous rachamim and so it comes out that on Yom Kippur not only do we say the 13 midos, but Hakadosh Boruch also recalls them.

MELECHES ZOREI'A & CHOREISH

Most would translate zorei'a as planting or sowing seeds, but it encompasses so much more. Any activity which promotes the growth of a tree or vegetation is included. In the production of the Mishkan, the skins and materials were colored with dyes produced with pigments found in herbs and the like and the first step in making these dyes was to plant the seeds which produced them. Zorei'a is unique in that unlike other melachos which the result of his efforts must be apparent on Shabbos itself, one is liable for the act of planting, even though the results won't appear for some time later that week at the earliest.

The av melacha of zorei'a includes planting seeds in the ground, planting saplings, pruning branches in order to promote its growth, grafting two trees together. (Although grafting different species is always prohibited, here we refer to the grafting of two trees of the same species in order that the stronger one strengthen the weaker. In any event, even one who violates the prohibition of grafting kilayim, is also guilty of chilul Shabbos if he grafts them on Shabbos.)

Any activity that promotes the growth is considered a toldah of zorei'a. This includes irrigation and watering, covering exposed roots of a tree with soil or dirt, pruning or removal of excess or heavy braches, removal of dry leaves from a tree, or fertilizing the soil of a field or the area around the tree. Additionally, any activities done to help fruit ripen or finish growing such as puncturing them to allow rainwater to penetrate, or applying oils or chemicals to the trees or its fruits are also prohibited as toldos.

Additionally, any activity which is done to prevent the occurrence of damage is also included as a toldah. Therefore, since weeds produce harmful substances, removal of weeds from a field or around a tree is forbidden. Similarly, removing or exterminating worms or other damaging insects is a toldah of zorei'a. If a tree's bark is removed, covering it to protect it from harm is likewise prohibited, as is building a shelter around its sides or top, or even erecting a support pole next to it to keep from being damaged by the winds or cold.

Practically speaking, one should be careful not to thrown seeds on the ground when eating outside, lest they sprout roots (Mishna Berura) and the Rema writes that ideally one should avoid eating and drinking outside altogether, unless it is on a wooden deck or stone patio etc. This is important to remember on Succos if one's succah is built on a grassy area, but he should be especially careful not to wash his hands over the grass which is somewhat common when washing mayim acharonim.

It is for this reason that one may not put flowers in water or even exchange the water for fresh water, since this will cause closed flowers to open up, and help opened flowers become stronger. One may also not move a plant into the sun or to an airy space; aside from the rabbinic prohibition of muktza, these activities are violations of the melacha of zorei'a. Therefore, one may not open a window in order to expose a plant to more sunlight or air. However, he need not refrain from opening a window to air out the room or the shades to let in light, just because he has plants near the window.

Before, and/or after the seeds are sown, the ground is plowed in order to soften the earth. This is known as the melacha of choreish (plowing). It purpose in the construction of the Mishkan was the same as that of zorei'a; to produce the ingredients necessary to make dyes for the leather and fabric of the Mishkan.

Whether one plows with a mechanically operated tool or a hoe, or uses an animal to plow he is liable. The consensus of the poskim is that this includes a modern day gas or electric powered plow or tractor. If one plows with some other item, he has only violated a rabbinic prohibition. Accordingly, even one who dragged a heavy bench across the ground and made a ditch has only violated choreish mi'derabanan, even if it was a case of a p'sik reishei (i.e. woul result with

certainty).

Any act which improves and better-readies the ground for planting is considered a toldah of choreish. Includes in this is the removal of stones or sticks from a field, or softening the ground by watering it or adding fertilizer in order to soften it. Even if one brings animals to a field with the intent that they should leave their waste behind as fertilizer, he violates a toldah of choreish.

Chazal also banned certain activities lest one come to level out the ground and so it is forbidden to play marbles or certain ball related sports such as hockey or bowling lest one come to level out the ground on which he is playing. One may however push a carriage over the ground; although it appears as he is making a ditch, Chazal view this as though he is suppressing and compacting the dirt beneath the carriage's wheels.

In earlier times, people lived in homes with dirt floors and so Chazal prohibited sweeping and cleaning the floors of own's home lest he come to level out uneven ground. In actuality, doing so in one's house is considered a toldah of boneh and not choreish, but the ban against these activities applies equally outdoors out of similar concern; lest one smooth out the surface and violate a toldah of choreish.

Regarding sweeping indoors, even one who has a tiled floor is prohibited from sweeping according to the basic halacha, on account of those who don't. However, if the majority of homes in a town are tiled (which is the case nowadays), sweeping is permitted. Nevertheless, this is only true indoors. Since it is impossible to say that the majority of the outdoors is tiles, accordingly, one who builds a succah on top of patio stones, etc. would be prohibited from sweeping the area on Shabbos or yom tov.

Although sweeping indoors is permitted nowadays (as above), one may not clean the floor with water, even if there is no issue of schitah (squeezing) such as is the case in Eretz Yisroel where 'sponja' involves the scraping of water and does not involve a mop. This is for a number of reasons, but primarily because people try to level and smooth out the area when cleaning the floor with water. Nevertheless, if one has a leak or flood, he scrape the water into a dustpan etc, or out the door (providing there is an eruv and that he is scraping onto pavement etc, and not the grass).



R' NOSSON TZVI FINKEL

11 Cheshvan 5771

R' Nosson Tzvi was born in Chicago in 1943 to R' Eliyahu Meir Finkel. He was named after his great-grandfather, the Alter of Slabodka.

He attended the local co-ed Jewish day school and when he was fifteen, he accompanied his parents on a trip to visit Eretz Yisroel during the summer.

The then rosh yeshiva of the Mir Yeshiva, R' Eliezer Yehuda Finkel, who was a great uncle, saw tremendous potential in the young boy and ask him to stay and learn in the Mir. Although he was a bright boy, he was a normal average American kid and he returned to Chicago to finish school. After high school, at the age of eighteen, R' Nosson Tzvi returned to the Mir and studied diligently under the tutelage of his great uncle.

A few years later, he married his second cousin, the granddaughter of Rabbi Eliezer Yehuda, the daughter of Rabbi Beinish Finkel and he spent years toiling away with extraordinary hasmadah, learning day and night, but made time and tremendous effort to reach out and help weaker bochurim with their learning.

When his father-in-law was niftar in 1990, he was selected to succeed him as rosh yeshivah. Although he was already suffering from Parkinson's disease, he not only accepted the yoke of leading a yeshivah of 1,000 students, but worked ceaselessly to build and grow the yeshiva (which numbered over 5,000 students and multiple buildings by the time he passed away), all the while, keeping up is learning schedule. Every second of his day was filled with shiurim, shmuessen, meetings with students and a lot of fundraising.

He succeeded in encouraging hasmadah and bringing others closer to Torah through his tremendous love for Torah. The yeshiva didn't have a stereotypical screaming mashgiach, and R' Nosson Tzvi wasn't one to sign a kol korei or public letter against anything, except when it came to banning cellphone use in the beis medrash as he felt it was too distracting.

R' Nosson Tzvi was completely immersed in Torah. In his own words Torah "is the sweetest thing in the world", and it was his ahavas Torah that he infused into the yeshiva and what carried him through a difficult medical condition. It transformed the stress of running and building up the yeshiva into an act of love and joy, and enabled him to endure his physical suffering as yisurim shel ahava!