



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT" L

It is an honor to present this week's Torah Minute from our archives. The following was penned by our founder, Rabbi Kalman Winter ZT" L, in 2011.

This week we begin the fourth book of the Torah: *Numbers*. The Torah (Chapter 2, Verse 2) speaks of the manner in which the Jewish nation encamped and journeyed through the desert. Members of each of the twelve tribes would encamp and travel according to their banner and insignia. The colors of the tribal banners corresponded to their respective, precious stones on the breastplate worn by the *Kohen Gadol* (High Priest). In addition, each tribal flag displayed an insignia with a defining image that characterized the unique nature of that particular tribe. The flag of the tribe of Judah, for example, was sky blue with the motif of a lion.

The arrangement of the tribal flags and the precise formation of their encampment and travels had their genesis in the experience that our people beheld at Mount Sinai. When G-d came to give the Torah to His nation, He was attended by myriads of angels, aligned in specific defining groups. Observing this heavenly, awe-inspiring sight, the Jews aspired to emulate these angelic formations. Hence, when the people of Israel traveled through the desert, they were imitating what they observed at Sinai.

The Commentators explain that what inspired the Jews about the angelic formations was not their physical precision and symmetry. The explanation runs to the heart of the function of an angel and its purpose. The Hebrew word for angel is *malach*, מלאך. *Malach* literally means messenger. An angel is a messenger of G-d, whose task and function is clear: to serve its Master with precision and integrity. The Jews at Sinai perceived the angelic formations as an expression of each angel's sublime mission. There was no ambiguity in their purpose. As the Jews embarked from Sinai upon their historical mission, to be a light unto the nations, they fervently desired as both tribes and individuals to merit to understand their individual and collective strengths. Accordingly, they established their formations as a constant reminder of their noble purpose.

In the *Musaf* service of *Rosh Hashanah*, the liturgy reads that G-d judges "the deeds of man and his purpose." We are not judged by our accomplishments alone but, rather, in the context of the extent of our individual, unique capabilities. As we traveled through the desert with our distinctive flags and formations, we declared that we were only as strong and accomplished as our understanding of our unique, individual capabilities. Therein lay the secret and inspiration that our people carried forth from Sinai, as they strove to emulate the angels above.

Shabbat Shalom,
Rabbi Kalman Winter

POINT TO PONDER

Four times a year the world is judged: On Pesach regarding the grain, on Shavuos regarding the fruit of the tree, on Rosh Hashana all mankind is judged, and on Sukkos regarding water (Rosh Hashana 1:2).

Ezra set up the reading of the Torah, as such, that we read the curses in Sefer Devarim before Rosh Hashana and the curses in Sefer Vayikra before Shavuos. Why? Abaye explained, in order that we should have the year and its curses finish. We understand how the curses in Sefer Devarim accomplish this, since it is read before Rosh Hashana, the Day of Judgment, but why is Shavuos considered to be a new year? Since we are judged regarding the fruit of the tree on Shavuos (Megilla 31b).

As Pesach is also a Day of Judgment, why did Ezra specifically set up the reading this way? He could have considered Pesach to be the beginning of a new year.

PARSHA RIDDLE

What does “Baruch Shem” and this week’s parsha have in common?

Please see next week’s issue for the answer.

Last week’s riddle: What mitzvos in Parshas Emor and Parshas Behar are very similar?

Answer: In Parshas Emor we have the mitzva to count seven weeks of seven days until the fiftieth day, which is Shavuos. Similarly, in Parshas Behar we have the mitzva to count seven cycles of seven years until the fiftieth year of Yovel.

HATORAH V’HAMITZVAH

Halacha Insights from the Parsha

Parshas Bamidbar is largely devoted to a detailed account of a Divinely ordained census of the Children of Israel. In general, *halachah* prohibits any direct census of Jews, and only permits conducting one indirectly, via the counting of fingers or other tokens (*Yoma* 22b, *Yad Ha’Chazakah Temidin U’Musafin* 4:4). Furthermore, there is an opinion that even an indirect census is only acceptable when necessary (*Ramban Bamidbar* 1:2).

There is, therefore, considerable controversy over the legitimacy of modern Israeli censuses. Some authorities condone them, while others forbid both their conduct as well as participation therein, or impose significant constraints upon them.

Following are some of the arguments pro and con:

- Some argue that the censuses are considered indirect counting and necessary, and may therefore be permitted (*Shut. Seridei Eish choshen mishpat* 140, *Shut. Mishpetei Uziel kerach 4 inyanim kelaliim siman 2*, *Shut. Yabia Omer chelek 10 choshen mishpat siman 2*, *Arnud Ha’Yemini siman 13*). Others, however, are not convinced that they are indeed considered necessary (*Shut. Shevet Ha’Levi* 6:20).
- *Halachic* authorities debate whether the prohibition of censuses encompasses those conducted via written forms and lists, or computers (*Shevet Ha’Levi*, *Yabia Omer*, *Shut. Tzitz Eliezer* 7:3).
- Some propose an additional basis for leniency due to the fact that the population size is already approximately known, and the censuses are conducted merely to obtain greater precision (*Yabia Omer*).
- There is an argument for leniency based on the fact that the censuses count all inhabitants of Israel and do not totally and accurately distinguish Jews from non-Jews (*Karyana De’Igarta* 1:244, *Shut. Shevet Ha’Levi* 9:35), although others argue that this does not completely alleviate the problem of census-taking (*Tzitz Eliezer*).

Presented by Rabbi Yitzhak Grossman, Rosh Chabura

KIDS KORNER

WHO AM I?

#1 WHO AM I?

1. I received my years from the first
2. Royalty
3. I was similar to Esav
4. I died on Shabbos
5. I was referred to as the “Dead Lion”

#2 WHO AM I?

1. I indicated your campsite
2. Don’t confuse me with a miracle
3. I was for the group
4. I am not a ban

Please see next week’s issue for the answers

Last Issue’s Answers:

#1 Ramchal, Rav Moshe Chaim Luzzato. Was born in 1707 in Italy and died in 1746 near Tiveria on 26 Iyar at the age of 40. He wrote the *Mesillas Yeshaorim* “Path of the Just”. (I lived and died in the 1700’s, I show you the Path, I am known for my acronym, Italian, I died at the age of understanding)

#2 Shevis / Shemitta (Don’t confuse me with Shavuos, Rest, I create holiness, I am for your money and fields)

All children 13 and under who answer a “Who Am I?” correctly will be entered into a raffle to

Win a
Stomp
Rocket
Ultra



Next Raffle
Drawing
June 2nd!

Congratulations to

Esther Stiber

and to all those who answered correctly this week!

Visit <http://www.gwckollel.org> to submit your answers. Answer as many as you can because each correct answer will entitle you to another raffle ticket and increase your chances of winning.

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The Greater Washington Community Kollel wishes our participants, friends, supporters, and the entire community a meaningful and joyous Shavuos!

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