1st Seder Weekly Divrei Torah
A BAIS MEDRASH PROGRAM FOR MEN

PARSHAS VAYISHLACH – BROTHERHOOD

Rabbi Shlomo Caplan

After Shechem's tragic assault of Dina, the Torah relates that Shimon and Levi took the matter into their own hands. "And the two of Yaakov's sons Shimon and Levi, Dina's brothers, each took his sword and they came upon the city (of Shechem) confidently and killed every male" (Bereishis 34:25). Rashi explains that although we already know that they were the brothers of Dina, the pasuk emphasizes that they acted out of a sense of brotherhood.

Rav Meir Tzvi Bergman sees in Rashi's explanation a profound idea. While it is natural to risk one's life for one's own survival, risking one's life for another person does not come naturally. However when it comes to one's brother or sister it becomes a personal matter, for a sibling is a blood relation deriving from the very same parents. Each sibling is a portion of the same progenitor. This is what Aharon meant when he asked Moshe to pray for Miriam who was stricken with tzaraas. Since she is born from the same womb as we, if she were to die it would be as if "half of our flesh had been consumed." (See Rashi Bamidbar 12:12.)

The Rambam (Matnas Aniyim 10:2) in codifying the laws of Tzedaka, expands this concept to include the brotherhood of all Jews. "All Yisrael and those who have joined (their ranks) are like brothers as it states, 'You are children of Hashem your G-d,' and if a brother will not have compassion on his brother, who will have compassion?" Since we all are Hashem's children, we are indeed all brothers. As explained before, brothers share the same "flesh" and having compassion for a brother is akin to having compassion for yourself. Thus, the Torah logically commands, "Love your fellow [Jew] as yourself" (Vayikra 19:18). This is because you should perceive him as a part of yourself.

Indeed, many Mitzvos bein adam lechaveiro are expressed in terms of brotherhood. To cite a few examples: "Do not hate your brother in your heart" (Vayikra 19:17), "If your brother will become impoverished…you shall strengthen him...so that he can live with you" (Vayikra 25:35), "You shall not see the ox of your brother or his sheep and ignore them; you shall surely return them to your brother" (Devarim 22:1).

Today, as we are all praying for the Jews in Eretz Yisrael as their crisis drags on and for Jews all over the world who are facing the threat of violent antisemitism, it is very appropriate that we refer to them as "Acheinu kol bais Yisrael hanesunim batzara ubashivia – Our brothers the entire House of Israel, who are in distress or captivity…" The more we perceive every Yid as our brother or sister, the more passionate our prayers become. These are the type of prayers that Hashem is waiting for and hopefully He will answer them and spare us from any further grief. Indeed, these are the prayers that can bring Mashiach bimheira beyameinu!

HALACHA Q&A FROM RABBI YISROEL UNGAR

Please contact R' Ungar (Ymungar@gmail.com) with questions or comments

QUESTION: A couple went to Florida on vacation. They arrived on ערב שבת and went shopping for all their שבת needs. They bought food galore to really enjoy their שבת! At ten minutes to שבת they realized they forgot about getting candles or oil and wicks and they had nothing to light with. They quickly ran to a few neighbors but couldn't procure any candles. With no choice we missed out on the מצוה that שבת. Do we have to light an extra נר?

ANSWER: The מצוה of הדלקת נרות is so important and unique in that when one misses one week, חז"ל enacted a קנס in which one must add on an extra נר for the rest of their life. This shows us how important this מצוה is. One reason for הדלקת נרות is for שלום בית. A well-lit house helps keep the peace. In the dark things are gloomy. When against one's will one couldn't light, then there is no קנס. If one had a baby and spent שבת in the hospital where they do not let you light נרות, then you are an אונס and you do not have to light an extra נר. If you simply forget to purchase נרות that is not an אונס. All the other delicacies you remembered and only forgot the נרות. That means that you still need to work on yourself to recognize the importance of the מצוה of הדלקת נרות and you must light an extra נר forever.

עי' סימן רס"ג סעי' א' ברמ"א ומ"ב ס"ק ז'

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THE CASE OF WINE

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Torah portion discusses how Yaakov sent gifts to Esav to placate his anger. This leads to the following true story.

Yitzchak was about to make Kiddush one week when he realized he did not have any wine. He went to his next-door neighbor, Dov, and asked to borrow a bottle. Dov agreed and quickly retrieved a bottle of Bartenura wine. Yitzchak took the bottle home.

A few weeks later, he returned with the same brand of Bartenura to his neighbor. "How did you enjoy the wine?" Dov asked. "To tell you the truth, I didn't even use it," Yitzchak replied. "What happened was, when I opened it, we smelled it and it smelled bad. We tasted it, and it was totally spoiled; it was vinegar. Therefore, I decided to make Kiddush on Challah that week. But let me tell you what happened next. After Shabbos, I called up Bartenura and told them we had received a spoiled bottle of wine. The customer service person was very sympathetic and extremely helpful. He said, 'Because of your discomfort and inconvenience, we're going to send you a whole case of our best brands for free to make you feel better.' Sure enough, the next day, an express shipment arrived with a huge case of Bartenura's best wine. So, one of them was this one, and I'm giving it back to you to replace the one that was spoiled."

Dov thought for a moment, "Just a minute. The truth is, that was my bottle of wine that was spoiled, and I paid for it. Bartenura is trying to placate you for the inconvenience, but really, they should be placating me, the customer who paid for it. I think perhaps all those other bottles of wine should go to me, because it was my wine that I gave to you, which you didn't even end up using, that was spoiled.

But Yitzchak disagreed. "No, they were trying to placate me for the inconvenience. I tasted the wine; and it was horrible. I went through the inconvenience of calling them, and they sent it to me."

Each of them felt that the whole case of wine should go to them.

What do you think? Should it go to Yitzchak, who suffered tasting the spoiled wine and called the customer service agents? Or should it go to Dov who was the actual customer who bought the wine? See Upiryo Matok Vayikra page 144.

Regarding las week's question about the dream, Rav Zilberstein brought a Chida (שם הגדולים מערכת גדולים אות א סימן קצט) where the Chida relates a similar story where the father of the Rosh came to his widow after he passed away on a Friday night and told her to flee because on the next day all the yidden in her area would be killed. She fled on Friday night and indeed the next day there was a massacre and she was saved.

There are conflicting sources in Shas whether one should pay attention to dreams or not. It will depend if the dream is relevant to the person himself; if he thinks that it is true and if he is afraid of the dream. Rav Zilberstein concludes that based on this, because it was relevant to the person, he felt afraid and felt that it is true then מדין מחללים שבת על ספק פיקוח נפש, and he should get up and flee even on Shabbos.

IT'S TRICK PHOTOGRAPHY

A grandson once showed Rav Avigdor Miller a picture in a newspaper depicting an apparent conflict between two Jewish groups. "It's trick photography," Rav Miller said. "The media loves to drum up conflicts even when there is none. These Jews really love each other, and so we love both groups."

"But they seem to really be fighting," his grandson persisted. "I will explain," Rabbi Miller replied. "The army has many divisions, ground troops, the marines, the navy, the air force, etc. Each is convinced that they are the best and most important, and naturally they feel an animosity toward the other branches. Yet, as far as the rest of the nation is concerned, they appear as one unified army supporting its country. And that is how everyone must look at them, for that is all that concerns them. Every soldier must know where he belongs and stay there — and so should you."

The grandson asked, "Who should I side with?"

"You just have to know that you are in the army of Hashem," Rabbi Miller answered, "and continue doing whatever service you are performing, keeping your own position. You don't have to be concerned with the issues of others."

From Rav Avigdor Miller, His Life and Revolution, By Yaakov Y.Hamburger, Published By Judaica Press. Reprinted With Permission From Table Talk.

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1st Seder

A BAIS MEDRASH PROGRAM FOR MEN

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