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

PARSHAS ZACHOR – WITHOUT A DOUBT

Rabbi Shlomo Caplan

"He called the place Massah U'meriva because of the contention of Bnai Yisrael and their testing Hashem saying, 'Is Hashem in our midst?' Amalek came and battled Yisrael in Rephidim" (Shemos 17:7-8). From the juxtaposition of the pesukim it appears that the attack of Amalek was a consequence of Bnai Yisrael questioning, "Is Hashem in our midst?" Why was the attack of Amalek the appropriate consequence of such doubt? In order to explain this, we must understand the battle with Amalek in a spiritual sense. Moshe perceived that the complaints of Bnai Yisrael derived from a lack of appreciation that Hashem is with them all the time. It is not dependent on their worthiness but is due to the spiritual core of every Yid. As the Rambam asserts (Hilchos Gerushin 2:20) that every Jew deep down wants to comply with the will of Hashem. The divorce document of a get can only be given with the consent of the husband. If a man is obligated to give his wife a get and refuses to do so, Bais Din may beat him until he states, "I am willing to give it." The Rambam asks how we can consider such a statement uttered under total duress to imply consent. He answers, "Since he wants to be a Yisrael, therefore he really wants to perform all the Mitzvos…It is his yetzer hara which has gotten the best of him. When he is beaten until the point that his yetzer is weakened and he states, 'I want to do it,' he has indeed given the get voluntarily."

It was Bnai Yisrael's self-doubt that opened the door to Amalek's confrontation. The Kaballistic commentaries note that the gematria of Amalek is safek – doubt. Amalek plays on our doubts: doubts about Hashem's omnipotence or doubts about our relationship with Hashem. When we feel that we are unworthy and therefore Hashem has abandoned us, we lose the confidence to improve and intensify our connection to Hashem. This empowers Amalek to attack us and attempt to destroy us.

It was precisely in the time of hester panim in the exile of Persia that Haman felt that he had the power to annihilate Bnai Yisrael. The Gemara (Megilla 13b) describes the conversation that took place when Haman approached Achashveirosh with his plot to destroy all the Jews. Achashveirosh countered, "I am afraid of their G-d that He may punish me as He did to my predecessors (Nevuchadnetzar and Balshatzar)." Haman replied, "Yashnu – they fell asleep in [in their performance of] Mitzvos." Haman implied that they have given up on themselves and therefore Hashem has abandoned them.

The miraculous salvation of Bnai Yisrael that occurred on Purim reminds us that Hashem is always in our midst. The Torah declares, "Who dwells with them amid their tum'ah" (Vayikra 16:16). Even when we have been sleepy in our adherence to Mitzvos or have totally fallen down on the job, He maintains His connection with us because of who we are. We are Bnai Yisrael and acknowledge the core of kedusha within us. Buoyed by this recognition, we are prepared to reaffirm with certainty our own "kiyemu vekiblu" – our complete and voluntary acceptance of the Torah and its Mitzvos.

This Dvar Torah is based on a shiur by Rav Ephraim Wachsman

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HALACHA Q&A FROM RABBI YISROEL UNGAR

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

QUESTION: May I rinse grape tomatoes or any fruits or vegetables that come in a container that has holes? Is it considered בורר with a כלי which is אסור?

ANSWER: The answer depends on why you are rinsing the vegetables or fruit. If there is real dirt mixed in, it is a mixture and it is אסור to use a כלי to separate it. However, invisible germs are not viewed as something that adds to a mixture and therefore when rinsing for hygenic reasons it is not considered בורר since there is no mixture. Normally, one may not use a כלי for בורר, but if your action is not בורר then it is even מותר to use a כלי, like in our case of tomatoes. One may ask; while it's true that the tomatoes are clean, but after pouring in water, there is now a mixture of tomatoes and water, and you definitely want the water to drain out. Why is that not בורר? The answer is, since when you pour the water into the container it was clear and not subject to בורר, even though afterwards it goes onto mix with something else and then subsequently separates all on its own, that is not attributed to your action. Also, since the tomatoes stay in their place and the water simply trickles straight through them, it never intermingles to become a mixture and is therfore not subject to בורר.

עי' סימן שי"ט שבכל שכשיש תערובות יש דיני בורר ופשוט הוא שפירות ולכלוכית חשוב תערובות. עי' אג"מ אוח"א סי' קכ"ה שכ' שרחיצת פירות למעליותא בעלמא לא הי בורר. עי' משנ"ב סי' שי"ט ס"ק ל"ג לטעם למה אינה בורר במים ששפך לפירות. לטעם שני שכתבתי עי' חזון איש סימן נ"ג סוף ד"ה ואפי' וכו' שכ' וז"ל "ואפשר שאין החול מתערב כלל עם המים אלא החול נכבש ועומד במקומו ואינו מתערב."

Weekly Question: What was Haman Ben Hamdasa's father's name? ***Note: Ben Hamdasa does not mean the son of Hamdasa. It means a descendant of Hamdasa. Haman, the evil person, was a descendant of Hamdasa, the evil person, who lived about 13 generations before Haman.***

(Answer on the back)

A TICKET TO AMERICA

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

Zahava, a very busy mother living in Eretz Yisrael, desperately needed a vacation. The only problem was that she couldn't find a babysitter to watch her children.

Finally, she met a young woman named Elisheva and offered her $1,000 to babysit her kids, plus a free ticket to the United States. Elisheva was very intrigued by the offer and agreed to take the job.

Zahava was extremely grateful, and she went away with her husband for a week while Elisheva dutifully babysat her children. When Zahava returned, she gratefully paid Elisheva the $1,000 and gave her the ticket to the United States. However, it turned out that the ticket was for a cruise, not a plane. The boat trip would take between two and three weeks to travel from Israel to America.

Elisheva was surprised. She hadn't expected a cruise ticket. When she had accepted the job, she had assumed the ticket would be for a flight—just as most people who travel from Israel to America would expect.

When Elisheva saw the ticket, she said, "I thought this was supposed to be a plane ticket."

Zahava responded, "I'm sorry, but this is what I have. I got a promotion for this, and it's all I can offer."

Elisheva felt very disappointed. She said, "But don't we go by the majority? The majority of people, when they hear 'a ticket to America,' assume it means a plane ticket."

Zahava replied, "You can't go by the majority when it comes to monetary matters."

They agreed to bring the question to a Rav. The question is:

Does Zahava have to pay Elisheva for a plane ticket, or is the cruise ticket sufficient? On one hand, most people would assume that "a ticket to America" means a plane ticket. On the other hand, Zahava never specified, and Elisheva made an assumption. So, is the cruise ticket acceptable? What do you think? See Chashukei Chemed Bava Kama Page 181

Regarding last week's question about the woman who found many toys on her lawn, Rav Zilberstein (Chashukei Chemed, Bava Kama, page 174) answered that if she had not given notice to her neighbors that she does not allow them to leave their belongings in her yard, she would have the mitzvah of hashavas aveidah (returning lost objects). However, once she put up a sign and informed them that she does not permit toys in her yard, any toys that ended up there would be considered aveidah mida'as—a lost object that was abandoned willingly. In that case, she is not obligated to return them and is allowed to remove them from her yard.

TZNIUS

Rabbi Asher Zelig Rubenstein zt"l, a Rosh Yeshiva of great repute, led Yeshivas Toras Simcha of Yerushalayim in the year 2000 when the following incident occurred.

Rav Moshe Shapiro zt"l gave a shiur to a select group of kollel avreichim, and Rav Asher Zelig very much wanted to join that chabura. When he asked Rav Moshe to accept him, Rav Moshe initially refused. However, after much insistence on Rav Asher Zelig's part, Rav Moshe conceded. Rav Asher Zelig was naturally the oldest member of the chabura and certainly the most prestigious. The gap between his age and Rav Moshe's was much smaller than the gap between him and the other avreichim.

Rav Moshe had an extremely strong kpeida (concern, issue) about the disturbance caused by cell phones. He made it very clear to the members of the shiur that the shiur was offered only on the condition that there would be absolutely no cell phones in the room. It was not sufficient to simply turn off the phone—he insisted that there should be no phones at all.

On this fateful day, in the middle of the shiur, a cell phone rang. Rav Moshe stopped, looked up, but said nothing. A few moments later, the phone rang again, and once more he stopped. When it rang a third time, Rav Moshe closed his Gemara and said that he could no longer continue the shiur. The silence in the room was palpable. At this point, Rav Asher Zelig got up, went to the back of the room, took the phone, shut it off, and apologized to Rav Moshe. Rav Moshe then asked him if it was his phone. Rav Asher Zelig again apologized and promised that it would not happen again.

When Rav Moshe realized that it was Rav Asher Zelig's phone, he told the group that, considering who Rav Asher Zelig was, he would overlook the incident and continue giving the shiur.

In 2013, at the shiva for Rav Asher Zelig, one of the visitors related this story to the family who had never heard it before. The visitor, one of the avreichim in that chabura, shared how Rav Asher Zelig had saved the shiur from being dissolved. The visitor then went on to reveal that, in truth, it had been his phone that rang. At the time of the incident, he had been too embarrassed to publicly admit it, so he remained silent.

Rav Asher Zelig never shared this incident with anyone. His wife knew nothing of it, nor did she know that her husband had taken the embarrassment upon himself to protect the avreich.

Fortunate is the one who serves HaShem with modesty. May his memory be a blessing.

As told to Paysach Diskind by Rav Asher Zelig's son-in-law.

Answer to this week's question: Between the various נוסחיות in מס' סופרים פי"ג and the תרגום שני, we have four possible names for Haman's father כוזא, ביזא, סרח, and סדא.

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Good Shabbos!