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

PARSHAS VAYISHLACH – OUR DEFENSE DEPARTMENT

Rabbi Shlomo Caplan

Rashi tells us that Yaakov made three preparations for his confrontation with Eisav: Doron – he sent gifts to placate Eisav, Tefillah – he prayed to Hashem to save him and his family, and Milchama - he prepared for battle should Eisav attack them. Rav Moshe Rabinowitz suggests that these tactics that Yaakov employed to protect himself from his archenemy can provide a major lesson for us in our battle against our yetzer hara. I would like to present his idea with some amplification.

Provide a gift: consider pacifying your yetzer hara by rewarding yourself for accomplishing a difficult task. It may be for arriving on time to shul, for going out of your way to do a chessed, for learning without any distractions, etc. This is the principle that a person should perform mitzvos even shelo lishmah – with an ulterior motive – for from shelo lishma one will come to lishma. Rav Rabinowitz has a novel explanation of how this principle should be applied. You use the lo lishma to quash the yetzer hara – which tells you not to do the Mitzvah – then you do the mitzva lishma – without thinking about your initial motivation.

Then there is the need for prayer. The Gemara in Kiddushin (30b) states, "Every day the Yetzer hara of a person attempts to overpower him and destroy him.. and if Hashem does not help him, he cannot defeat him." Now if we always need Hashem's help in this battle, it behooves us to pray for it. If we look at Tefillas Shacharis we can find many references to such a request: The berachos of V'haarev na, Hamaavir Sheina, Ahava Rabba. Additionally, in Uva Letzion there is a lengthy and very specific request of Hashem to assist us in His service so that we may be zoche to Olam Haba and Yemos Hamashiach. May you open our hearts to the Torah. This is just a brief selection of Tefillos of Shacharis. In addition, we are encouraged to make up our own personal supplications to be recited in Elokai netzor or any time we need His help.

Then there are times when the Yetzer hara puts up a major battle, and we really need to struggle to defeat it. Just as Yaakov prepared to defend himself if Eisav were to attack, we too must be psychologically prepared to fight with our yetzer hara. Indeed, the Mesilas Yesharim states in Chapter 1 that the battle with the Yetzer hara can take place on many fronts. "However, if one will be a valiant soldier and win the war on all sides, he will become the complete person worthy to bask in the light of Hashem's presence."

While the yetzer hara is an awesome enemy, the Torah provides us with an arsenal of weapons to defend ourselves: Doron, tefillah, and milchama.

HALACHA Q&A FROM RABBI YISROEL UNGAR

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

QUESTION: We like rice. In our rice cooker we cook up rice before שבת and then leave it on 'keep warm' for the rest of שבת. Sometimes I take a serving bowl of rice and not all of it is finished. May I return the cold uneaten rice back into the rice cooker so it can get hot again?

ANSWER: Regarding חזרה/returning dry cooked foods to a fire on שבת, one needs 5 things in place: 1- There must be a blech on the fire source. 2- The food must be fully cooked. 3- the food must still be warm. 4-There was כוונה to return it. 5- One is still holding onto the food. If only one of the last two rules are missing, one may still return the food to the fire. If both of the last two rules are missing if it is a שעת הדחק one may be lenient and put the food back on the fire. If one of the first two rules are missing, then it is אסור to return the food to the fire. In the case of a rice cooker, if there is no blech then no food may be returned to it on שבת. Assuming the rice is fully cooked, even if one puts a blech inside the cooker by lining the inside with aluminum foil, if you take out a bowl of rice which was intended to eat and not return, and it is now also cold (however this is the דין even if it is still warm), then it should not be returned to the cooker unless it's a שעת הדחק.

עי' סי' רנ"ג סעי' ב' ומ"ב ס"ק נ"ו וביאור הלכה ד"ה ודעתו. וחזון איש סי' ל"ז ס"ק י"ב.

WEEKLY PARSHA QUESTIONS: Yaakov asked the malach, "What is your name?" When else does someone in Tanach ask a malach his name? How long did Yaakov have a limp, after being attacked by the malach?

THE LARGE BACKPACK

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

Rabbi Muller, a distinguished rabbi, flew with his family to Eretz Yisroel for a chasuna. He was there for a little more than a week.

On the Thursday before his planned return on Sunday, he intended to go with his family to the Me'aras HaMachpela. He had bought a ticket for the 9:00 a.m. bus leaving from the Tachana Merkazit and needed to be back in Yerushalayim by 1:00 p.m. This was his last opportunity to visit the Me'aras HaMachpela. He went upstairs in the Jerusalem central bus station, the Tachana Merkazit, to a quieter area. While learning and waiting for the bus, an Israeli fellow walked by. The man was wearing a yarmulke and looked perfectly normal and respectable, nothing suspicious at all. He asked Rabbi Muller, "Excuse me, could you watch my backpack for a few minutes?" It was a huge backpack, the kind used for camping or long-distance travel. Rabbi Muller said, "No problem".

The man left. Rabbi Muller assumed he had gone to the bathroom and expected him to return in a minute or two. But as time passed, it was getting closer to 9:00, the departure time of the bus to Me'aras HaMachpela. As the time approached, Rabbi Muller faced a dilemma. He didn't want to miss the bus, since this was his last chance to visit Me'aras HaMachpela before returning to America. On the one hand, he wanted to go catch the bus and leave the package behind. On the other hand, he realized that such a large, unattended backpack would be considered a chefetz chashud, a suspicious object. Almost certainly, security would treat it as dangerous, and the bag would be destroyed. There was also a good chance that the entire bus station, with its crowds of people and its many buses and trains, would be shut down for a long time, causing a major disruption, all because he left the package unattended.

So Rabbi Muller wondered: what should he do? Could he simply leave the package in order to make his bus and go to the Me'aras HaMachpela as planned, knowing that doing so would cause the destruction of the backpack and likely much more disruption? Or did he have an obligation to stay, watch the package, and wait for the owner to return, even if it meant missing his trip entirely?

What do you think? Did he have to stay and watch the package, or was he allowed to leave? This dilemma was shared with Rabbi Weiner by the protagonist.

Regarding last week's question about the person who donated money for books: Rabbi Zilberstein (VH"N Vol. 4 Hebrew Page 475) cites an opinion mentioned in the Mishna Berura that when someone gives tzedakah, he does not have the right to limit how the money must be used. Rabbi Zilberstein concludes that even those who disagree with this opinion would agree that, in this case, the money given for seforim may be used for glasses, since both purposes share the same intention, helping him learn Torah.

HE ALREADY PUT INTO THE PLAN THAT DOVID TRENK WOULD HAVE TO SIT FOR THREE HOURS IN TRAFFIC

Rabbi Yoel Gold told the following story. About 20 years ago, he was learning in the Yeshiva of Rav Shlomo Breuer when he got a phone call from his rebbe, Rav Dovid Trenk. His rebbe said, "I want to go from Lakewood to so-and-so's chasunah. Do you know where it is?" Rav Gold answered, "As far as I know, it's in Ateres Avrohom in Williamsburg."

The next day, Rav Gold met a friend who had been at the chasunah. He asked him, "How was the wedding in Ateres Avrohom?"

His friend looked at him and said, "What? The wedding was in the Atrium in Monsey." Rav Gold said, "Oh no. I told Rav Dovid Trenk that it was at Ateres Avrohom in Williamsburg, Brooklyn." He was so embarrassed to call and find out what happened, but he called Rav Dovid to apologize.

When Rabbi Gold called, Rav Dovid smiled and said, "Yes, I went to Ateres Avrohom, but don't feel the least bit bad. Do you know why? Because from sheishes yemei bereishis, when HaKadosh Baruch Hu created the world, He already put into the plan that Dovid Trenk would have to sit for three hours in traffic on the way from Lakewood to the chasunah, and three hours back. You were just the shliach of Hashem."

Rav Gold asked, "But what happened at the chasunah? What did you do?" His rebbe said, "I walked in, and it was a Ger's chasunah. I didn't recognize anyone. I got into the middle, grabbed the chosson, and danced with him, even though I didn't know a soul."

Rav Gold concluded that Rabbi Trenk would never have mentioned anything or said a word about it if he, Rav Gold, hadn't brought it up.

What do we take from this story? We see the incredible Emunah and bitachon Rav Trenk had. He didn't view his talmid as the one who caused him to go to the wrong chasunah. He didn't see him as someone who caused him to waste time or sit in traffic for three hours there and three hours back. All he saw was one thing: HaKadosh Baruch Hu, the Ribbono Shel Olam, had already planned from sheishes yemei bereishis that this is what would happen.

That is what we have to take. Everything that happens in our lives was programmed from the moment the world was created. When HaKadosh Baruch Hu made the world and perfectly designed how it would run, everything that happens in our lives was already planned from sheishes yemei bereishis. Reprinted with permission from Table Talk.

Answers to this week's questions: ***When a malach appeared to Shimshon's parents, informing them that he would be born, Manoach asked the malach his name. Yaakov and the malach fought until alos hashachar, at which point the malach settled for injuring Yaakov's leg. When the sun rose, Yaakov was healed.***

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Good Shabbos!