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

PARSHAS BESHALACH – PLAY IT SAFE

Rabbi Shlomo Caplan

Krias Yam Suf – the splitting of the Sea of Reeds – was one of the most dramatic miracles in history. At the precise moment, the sea split and Bnai Yisrael passed through, walking on dry land. After the last Jew arrived safely ashore the sea returned to its raging flow, drowning the Mitzrim who had descended into it. It was due to Bnai Yisrael's witnessing this awesome event that "They believed in Hashem and in Moshe His servant" (Shemos 14:31).

The angels in heaven protested: "Why do you spare the Jews and not the Mitzrim? Both of them are idol worshippers!" It must have taken a very special zechus for Hashem to ignore their argument. What was that zechus?

The Medrash provides the answer. It cites the familiar quote from the chapter of Tehillim recited in Hallel: "The sea saw and fled" (Tehillim 114:3). "What did the sea behold? It saw the casket of Yosef about whom it is written, 'He fled and ran outside' (to escape the advances of Potifar's wife)" (Bereishis 39:12). Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz questions why this act was more extraordinary than all the other steps that Yosef took to avoid succumbing to sin. He explains that because Yosef fled in such haste, he left his garment in the woman's hand. This garment was subsequently used by Potifar's wife to incriminate Yosef and have him confined to the dungeon. As the Ramban notes, Yosef was certainly stronger than her and could easily have pulled the garment out of her grip. Why didn't he? Rav Chaim suggests that it was because this brief tug of war would have delayed his exit. Yosef did not want to remain even one more second in the presence of temptation. This took great courage and a willingness to endure its consequences. This was what the sea saw. The tenacity of a righteous Jew to avoid an immoral act at all costs.

Rav Chaim observes that this act of Yosef is a model of a fundamental principle in serving Hashem. A person must avoid placing himself in a situation of a nisayon – a forbidden temptation. We must know where to draw the battle lines. The right strategy is to avoid entering into a place of temptation which would force us to do battle with the Yetzer Hara on his turf. In such circumstances a person requires extraordinary strength to resist. Even if initially one perseveres, sooner or later he will succumb to temptation.

Therefore, the Gemara (Sanhedrin 107a) warns us, "A person should never bring himself to a situation where he will be tested, for Dovid, the king of Yisrael, brought a test upon himself and he succumbed." Thus we daven every day, "Do not bring a test upon us."

Rav Chaim demonstrates his point by citing a Gemara (Sotah 3a): "A person does not sin unless he is overcome with a spirit of insanity." Rav Chaim asks, if this is true, how can one be held fully accountable for his sins? He answers with a mashal. A person stands at the very edge of a deep pit on a windy day and a powerful gust of wind comes and casts him into the pit. Since he was incapable of withstanding the force of the wind, was the outcome his fault? Of course it was, because he had no business standing so close to the pit. So too, a person has no right to place himself in the way of temptation. Although at that point he may no longer have control, he will still be held fully accountable.

In our ongoing conflict with the Yetzer Hara the battle lines must be drawn on our turf. We must do all we can to avoid ending up in a place of temptation because we cannot rely on good intentions or even sheer willpower to overcome such a test. This attitude will determine what places we visit, with whom we associate and what we allow into our homes. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Any other approach is "insanity".

HALACHA Q&A FROM RABBI YISROEL UNGAR

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

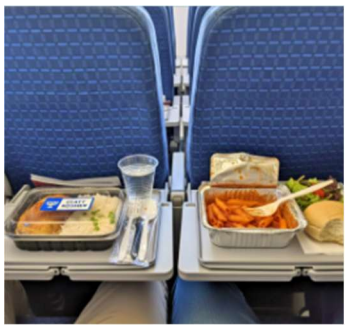
QUESTION: I recently went to a "Challah Bake," where a couple of hundred women got together to do the מצוה of הפרשת חלה. We formed groups and then one woman in each group made a ברכה on the 5 pound dough. We then split up the dough to braid them into challahs and we each took home one or two challahs. Is there any problem with this?

ANSWER: In order to be able to make a ברכה on הפרשת חלה one needs to have 5 pounds of flour. If one plans on splitting up a 5 pound dough into different doughs to make different products of which you wouldn't want them to mix, then the different doughs do not combine to allow a ברכה. For example, if you use half for challah and half for chocolate kokosh cake, then even though you started out with a full 5 pound dough, the split separated them and one should not make a ברכה. If each dough is 2.5 pounds then the הלכה is to take off חלה without a ברכה. The same is true if you plan on sharing a dough with a friend and each of you will walk away with a dough less than 5 pounds, then you do not a ברכה on the original 5 pound dough, since the plan was to split it up. If one makes a 5 pound dough and freezes half for a different week, then you take off חלה without a ברכה

עי' יו"ד סי' שכ"ו סעי' א' וב'. השיעור הוא שיעור של החזון איש. עי' שש"כ פרק מ"ב סעי' י"א לגבי חלה בלא ברכה כשמחלק לעיסה לאחר זמן..

AIRPLANE FOOD

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner



Avi lived in Israel and needed to take a flight to Mexico to visit family. He thought he had ordered a kosher meal for the flight. However, while he was on the plane and the flight attendants began distributing meals, a stewardess told him, "I'm sorry, we don't have a kosher meal reserved for you."

A Jewish, secular Israeli man sitting to Avi's right spoke up and said, "You know what? I don't want you to be hungry. Here, take my kosher meal. I'll take a regular meal." Before Avi fully realized what was happening, the man slid his unopened kosher meal over to Avi, and the stewardess handed the man a regular meal instead.

Avi tried to object, but the man wouldn't hear of it. He immediately opened the packaging and began eating the regular meal. Avi didn't know what to do. He now had a kosher meal, and the man next to him was enjoying his food. Avi began to wonder: now that this had already happened, now that this Jewish man was eating a non-kosher (treif) meal, was Avi allowed to eat the kosher meal?

On one hand, if Avi didn't eat it, the meal would likely be thrown away. On the other hand, by eating it, he was benefiting from the fact that another Jewish person was eating treif. In a certain sense, it could be seen as condoning it. So Avi wondered what he should do. Should he eat the meal, or should he not? What do you think? See Chashukei Chemedf Bava Kama Page 357.

Regarding last week's question about the blood test: Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein (Chashukei Chemed, Bava Kama 356) answered that in order to save the life of a dangerously ill person who is in front of us, one is permitted to "steal blood" by saying that it is for a blood test. However, this is only on the condition that afterward one must compensate the donor for both the pain and the blood itself.

"I WILL NOT BE ABLE TO GIVE THEM A FULL SMILE!"

It was Erev Shabbos, only hours before licht bentchen. The phone rang in the home of R' Nosson Zev Nussbaum. It was the mashgiach. After greeting him warmly, the mashgiach asked, "Perhaps it is possible to find a dentist who will still treat me before Shabbos. I really need a dentist today."

"Oy!" R' Nosson Zev commiserated. "If the mashgiach is calling now, he must be in tremendous pain. Otherwise, he would wait until after Shabbos."

"No," Rav Mattisyahu replied. "I can manage with the pain. The reason for the urgency is that the dental issue I have is preventing me from smiling a full smile. Tonight, the entire yeshivah will file past me to wish me a 'Gut Shabbos,' expecting me to give them a full smile. Some people wait for this smile all week. If I do not go to the dentist and have the problem fixed, I will not be able to give them a full smile!"

This was an imperative that the mashgiach constantly stressed. It was imperative that an oveid Hashem be b'simchah, happy and full of joy and good cheer. When he came to Lakewood, one of the first things he spoke about and demanded was simchah. When people would file past to wish him a "Gut Shabbos" on Friday night, he would ask them, "Where is your smile? You are learning Torah. You have the zechus to serve Hashem. Why is that simchah not visible on your face?"

(From Rav Mattisyahu, by R' Avrohom Birnbaum, published by Artscroll Mesorah) Reprinted With Permission from Table Talk.

This week's 1st Seder Weekly has been dedicated in memory of Drew Dorman Avrohom Gedaliah ben Shmuel HaCohen (z"l)

Please join any of the 30+ First Seder weekly shiurim – Mishnayos, Gemara, Halacha, Tefilla, Parsha, Tehillim, Mussar and more! M-F 9:20 AM. - 1:15 PM. If you have any questions, or to register, sponsor or donate, please contact Rosh Bais Medrash Rabbi Uri Greenspan at rabbigreenspan@firstseder.org 732-407-3178

Good Shabbos!