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

PARSHAS TERUMAH – WHERE CHARITY BEGINS

Rabbi Shlomo Caplan

The Bais Halevi asserts that there is a good reason why Parshas Terumah follows Parshas Mishpatim. Parshas Terumah begins with Hashem's directive to Bnai Yisrael to donate funds to the Mishkan. Parshas Mishpatim discusses the laws of jurisprudence and monetary gobligations. The Torah is thus telling us that before we contribute our assets to a worthy cause, we must be sure that they really belong to us. If the money isn't rightfully ours or is tainted by questionable scruples, it does us no good. Just like one cannot perform the Mitzvah of Lulav with a stolen Lulav, one cannot fulfill the Mitzvah of Tzedakah with stolen assets. The Bais Halevi cites the pasuk in Yeshaya (55,1) which states, "Thus said Hashem, 'Observe justice and give Tzedakah.'" First observe justice and only then give Tzedakah.

Rashi in Parshas Noach tells us that although the sins of idolatry and immorality were rampant in the generation of the flood, their fate was sealed because of thievery. This requires some explanation since certainly idolatry and immorality are much more severe aveiros than stealing. There are a number of possibilities which come to mind. (1) Due to the fact that all their property was tainted with thievery all the Mitzvos which they did with their money were null and void. Thus those Mitzvos were unable to counterbalance their aveiros. (2) It is much more difficult to do Teshuva for stealing since it requires that they make restitution. As far as idolatry and immorality were concerned the door of Teshuva could have remained open. Since they could not do Teshuva for a life of thievery, their fate was sealed. (3) Chazal tell us (Vayikra Rabba 17) that Hashem does not exact retribution from one's physical being before first bringing punishment on his property. However, if his property does not belong to him, Hashem must resort to a physical punishment first. Therefore, their stolen assets could not have saved them (Meloh Ha'omer).

The significance of honesty in financial matters goes to the core of our relationship with Hashem. Perhaps Dovid Hamelech put it best: "Hashem, who may dwell in your Tent? Who may live on your Holy Mountain? One who walks in perfect innocence and does what is right and speaks the truth from his heart" (Tehillim 15,1-2). "Who may ascend the Mountain of Hashem and who may stand in the place of His sanctity? One with clean hands and a pure heart" (ibid. 24,3-4).

Klal Yisrael are renowned for their magnanimity and the huge sums of Tzedakah which they give. Nonetheless it is not quite so simple to find many people who are so committed to a high level of honesty. For some reason people tend to be very willing to part with their money for charitable causes, yet they will engage in all types of dishonest (or highly questionable) practices to make a few extra bucks. Have we got our priorities mixed up? We need to think twice about our financial dealings and to become accustomed to asking our monetary she'ailos to competent poskim when necessary.

If we truly want to ascend Hashem's Mountain, we should start with honesty and then move on to giving Tzedakah.

HALACHA Q&A FROM RABBI YISROEL UNGAR

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

QUESTION: We make tea essence for שבת which we leave in a cup. We first make a כלי שני of hot water and then we add the tea essence. When the tea essence is running low, is it okay to empty out all the tea essence until the last drop?

ANSWER: A tea bag is a filter. When using a tea bag on שבת one may not remove the bag and hold it above a cup until the bag empties of the liquid. That would be an act of בורר with a כלי. A tea bag that is within a cup of tea essence is full of tea and as you pour out some essence, even though some of the essence from within the tea bag empties, however, that tea is replaced with more tea and that is not considered as if you are using a כלי to sort your tea. However, once you get down to the bottom of the cup when there is no essence left except for within the tea bag, at that point you may not continue pouring since you are using a כלי to separate tea from the tea leaves within the bag. The same is true if you are drinking a tea with a tea bag in the cup, when you get to the bottom of the tea, you must stop drinking so as not to cause the tea within the bag to come out. This is not דרך אכילה since the בורר is happening a step before you actually drink the tea. (Using a tea bag on שבת is possibly בישול unless it's iced tea or כלי שליש - ר' משה)

עי' סימן שי"ט סעי' י"ד ועי' מנחת יצחק ח"ד סימן צ"ט וקיצור הלכות שבת מלאכת בורר סעי' י"ז הובא בס' זכור ושמור הל' בורר

FILL YOUR CART!

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

Ari once called his friend Dani, "I'm hosting a big event tonight, but I'm stuck at work. Could I ask you for a huge favor? Here's a list, could you please go to the grocery store and buy everything I need for the party? I'll pay you back tonight."

Dani replied, "No problem." He went to the supermarket and filled up the shopping cart according to the list. By the time he finished, the cart was completely full, about 2,000 shekels' worth of products.

As he approached the counter to check out, he heard an announcement over the loudspeaker: "Hello, this is Rami Levy, the owner of this supermarket. We're running a special promotion that we offer periodically. For the next three minutes, anyone with a completely full shopping cart can come to the checkout and receive their entire cart for free."

Dani happened to have a completely full shopping cart, and he was very excited, he had a chance to win. But then he thought, "all this 2,000-shekel merchandise will go to Ari. Why don't I keep this cart for myself, and then come back and fill another cart for him? I'll get 2,000 shekels' worth of groceries for free, and the second cart will be for Ari."

Then he reconsidered: "Maybe I can't do that. For the past half hour, I've been filling this cart with Ari in mind. Perhaps I can't suddenly decide that it's all for me and then start a new cart for him." Or perhaps it doesn't make a difference that he originally had Ari in mind? After all, the groceries don't belong to Ari yet, and Dani has the right to keep this cart for himself and start a new one for Ari. This question was brought to Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein. What do you think? See Chashukei Chemed Nedarim page 335

Regarding last week's question about the man stealing the Sefer Torah, Rav Zilberstein (Chashukei Chemed, Bava Kama, p. 372) quotes Rav Chaim Kanievsky that the reason one Normally cannot interrupt in the middle of Shemoneh Esrei, even to prevent a great loss of money, is because it is disrespectful to Hashem. In this case, allowing the Torah to be stolen would be disrespectful, and interrupting would be a way to show Hashem more respect. Therefore, one is allowed to interrupt in the middle of Shemoneh Esrei to prevent the desecration of the Torah and Hashem's honor.

WRITE THE WORDS ON THE BOTTOM FIVE ROWS OF THE PAGE

Rav Yaakov Edelstein often told the following story during the week of Parashas Shoftim, which commands that when we lay siege to a certain city, we may not damage the surrounding trees: לא תשחית את עצה, You shall not destroy its trees (Devarim 20:19).

Chazal explain that this isn't just a prohibition against chopping down trees but against causing any wanton destruction, which is referred to as the prohibition of "bal tashchis." Don't damage something that gives you benefit or destroy something that has a purpose.

Be sensitive to every detail in our world; even a pad of paper or a disposable cup.

"When I was young, the Chazon Ish told me to write down several lines that he would dictate to me, word for word. He told me to take a pad of writing paper from his desk and start writing.

He saw me place the pen on the first line of the page, and then he stopped me and said, 'Not like that. Write the words on the bottom five rows of the page.'

Why? So that the sheet of paper would remain attached to the pad at the top and could still be used after he cut off the bottom five rows.

I learned from him how one needs to be sensitive to the environment, to material objects."

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Good Shabbos!