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

MAZEL TOV to Reb Daniel Baltuch and the participants of his shiur on the completion of Bava Basra! The shiur is now learning Kesubos. Great time to join.

PARSHAS BEHAALOSCHA – MEMORIES

Rabbi Shlomo Caplan

In most siddurim, a list of the sheish zechiros – six remembrances – can be found after the Shacharis davening. One of them derives from an event in this week's Parsha: Hashem punished Miriam for speaking lashon hara about Moshe. In Parshas Ki Seitzei Moshe commands us, "Remember what Hashem, your G-d, did to Miriam, on the way, when you left Mitzrayim" (Devarim 24:9). By remembering Miriam's punishment we will be cognizant of the severity of the sin of lashon hara and refrain from engaging in this terrible aveirah.

Another one of these zechiros is to remember the Exodus from Mitzrayim. The Ramban in Parshas Bo (Shemos 13:16) explains the significance of this Mitzvah. Hashem is not willing to perform miracles to demonstrate to every agnostic in every generation that He really does exist and that He is totally in control of the fate of the world and mankind. Therefore, He commanded us to maintain a perpetual remembrance of the miracles that He performed on our behalf when He redeemed us from Mitzrayim.

In our Parsha we also read about another collective memory of Bnai Yisrael, one which they brought with them from Mitzrayim. When they complained about the mon, they bemoaned, "We remember the fish that we ate in Mitzrayim free of charge" (Bamidbar 11:5). At the time of this complaint, Bnai Yisrael had already received the Torah, had built a Mishkan to bring the Shechina into their midst and were dining on the divine bread of the mon. Yet the memory of the fish they ate in Mitzrayim continued to influence their attitude. This is such a powerful message regarding the influence which old memories, even trivial ones, can continue to hold sway over us.

As individuals, we all have a myriad of personal memories, from our childhood until the present. It is these memories – both conscious and subconscious – which mold our personalities and help to define who we are. Every event that has occurred in our lives creates an imprint on our brain. Some are bold images and some are weak ones. Some are permanent and some are transient. Some are positive and some are negative. Nevertheless, we do have a significant degree of control over our memories. We can cognitively reinforce the positive ones and diminish or mitigate the negative ones. We can choose to focus on the memories which will enable us to grow emotionally and spiritually, and strive to let go of those that constrict and diminish us.

It is also extremely important to bear in mind that the events of today will become the memories of tomorrow. We should give a great deal of thought to how we react to these events and how we record them. Once I attended a reunion of cousins where they reminisced over events they had shared when growing up together. It was amazing to see the variations in the way they recalled these events. Each one had perceived the events from his own perspective and then formed his memory based on that. How we view events and how we react to them will create the memories that impact us for a lifetime.

Additionally, to a great extent, we can supervise the events and situations which we let into our lives. What we should see and hear. Where we should go and where we ought not to go. With whom we should have contact and whom we should avoid. Very often these are choices that we can make which will determine the memories that we will carry with us forever.

If what we remember has such a profound impact on our destinies in this world and in the next, we should try our very best to make them positive and productive memories.

HALACHA Q&A FROM RABBI YISROEL UNGAR

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

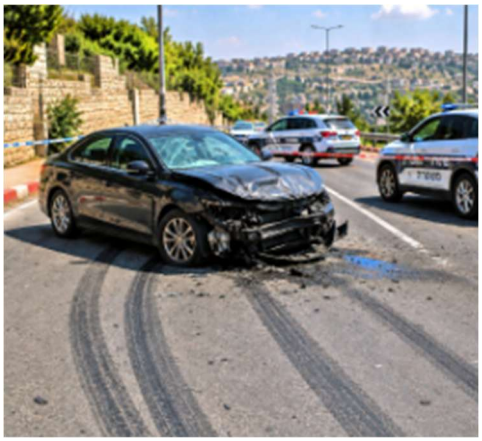
QUESTION: I am gluten free and limited in the foods I can eat. Oat flour is the only flour from the מינים ה' that I may eat. I also may eat rice. Many products are made from oat, rice, almond, and potato flour. Can you please give me a run down of the proper ברכות for these items?

ANSWER: The rule is: Anything that is mashed or pureed to the point that the original fruit/grain/vegetable is not recognizable, it loses its original ברכה and is שהכל. The exception to this is, the מינים ה' and rice. Grain of the מינים ה' that is ground up into flour and made into bread/cake/cookies/crackers is upgraded to המוציא/מזונות. Oats is from the מינים ה' and its bread is המוציא. If it's made into cake/cookie, it's מזונות. Rice is more חשוב than the average grain and is also upgraded to מזונות when made into bread or cake. Many gluten free foods are made from oats and rice and would be המוציא/מזונות. A difference between oats and rice is: Oat flour that is added as an ingredient for taste, being that it is from the מינים ה', automatically wins even if it is not the majority ingredient. A food containing rice flour will only be a מזונות if the rice flour is the majority ingredient, which is usually the case if it's listed first. Almond and potato flour are שהכל – figure out the majority ברכה in the ingredients.

עי' סימן ר"ב סעי' ז' ברמ"א. ועי' סי' ר"ח סעי' ז' לגבי אורז וסעי' ט' לגבי ה' מינים.

THE ACCIDENT

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner



There was a doctor in Eretz Yisroel who was traditional, but not religious. He was also a humanitarian. He had offices in different cities in Israel, and on different days he would travel to different hospitals to see patients. On Monday he would be in one city, on Tuesday in another city, and so on. That was his practice.

One day, while he was driving in the course of his work helping people, a young boy suddenly ran into the street right in front of his car. The doctor tried to stop, but he hit the boy. Sadly, the boy passed away.

The doctor, who spent his entire day helping people, was completely distraught. He remembered a teaching he had once learned: Megalgilin zechus al yedei zakai, v'chov al yedei chayav, that good things are brought about through good people, and difficult or painful things are brought about through those who are not worthy. He began thinking, "Why in the world would Hashem cause me to kill somebody? How could this be?"

He fell into a deep depression. He stayed home and stopped traveling to the hospitals. Patients were waiting for him in different cities, but he was not seeing anyone. A huge backlog built up, and no one was able to console him.

One day, a friend came to him and said, "You know, there is a traditional idea that when someone passes away, people learn Mishnayos for the neshama. Maybe you should commit to learning Mishnayos for a year. Perhaps that will help you feel a little better about the whole situation."

For some reason, the idea appealed to him. But he hesitated. "I'm not so good at Mishnayos," he said. "That would be very hard for me." "No, no," his friend said. "You can do it. You can take a Kehati Mishnayos, and you'll manage." With some hesitation, the doctor agreed. "Okay," he said. "I want to do that. I'll learn le'ilui nishmas this boy who passed away. I'll learn Mishnayos for a year."

He chose Pirkei Avos, something more manageable, but it was still a big undertaking for him. It was not easy. Still, it helped him feel a little better. Eventually, he went back to work, and things began to settle down.

A short while later, he learned the story behind the story. The boy who had run into the street was the son of a well-known Arab terrorist, a man who had killed or attempted to kill Jews. This was the terrorist's son who had run into the street and, tragically, had been killed.

Who knows what Hashem's plan was? But the doctor realized that the child had not been Jewish. He was the son of a terrorist, a murderer.

Now the doctor felt conflicted. He had committed himself to learning Mishnayos for the rest of the year for the soul of an ostensibly Jewish boy, but now he was no longer sure if he should continue. Was it appropriate? Was he still obligated? It was not an easy question for him.

So he brought the question to Rav Chaim Kanievsky. He asked, "What should I do in this case? I committed to learning Mishnayos for the child of a terrorist. What should I do?" What do you think? See Chashukei Chemed Nedarim Page 264

Regarding last week's question about the mystery bag and the two sheitels, Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein, in Chashukei Chemed, Nedarim, page 405, answers that the messenger is responsible to pay for the entire loss. Once he agreed to watch the bag, he had to assume that it might have had very expensive items inside.

THE JUDGES OF THE TORAH FEEL BEHOLDEN TO THOSE WHO BENEFIT THEM IN ANY AMOUNT

Rav Meir Chodosh, the Mashgiach of the Chevron Yeshiva, once met a member of Israel's Supreme Court, who asked him a question. The justice wanted to know what amount of money would be considered shochad, the bribery that the Torah forbids a judge from accepting from litigants.

Rav Meir told him that even a few pennies would be considered shochad, disqualifying a judge from hearing a case. The justice was disturbed by this answer. "Does the Torah have so little faith in man?" he asked. "Are the judges of the Torah so weak that a few shekels can cloud their judgment?"

Rather than answer, Rav Meir asked a question of his own. "If I were standing before you in judgment, and just before the case, I handed you the gift of a Parker pen, would that affect your verdict?"

The judge was offended by the suggestion. "Do you think that a pen that costs a hundred shekels could influence me?" he asked in disbelief. "Do you think we are such small people?" "And what if I handed you an envelope with ten thousand dollars inside it?" Rav Meir asked. "That is a different story," the judge conceded, "and I could hear that it might impact the judge's conclusion."

"So what you yourself are telling me," Rav Meir said, "is that the justice system in Israel is filled with judges who are so ungrateful that it would take ten thousand dollars to get them to feel some sort of appreciation toward another person, while the judges of the Torah feel beholden to those who benefit them in any amount. Tell me", the mashgiach concluded, "who is the small person?"

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GOOD SHABBOS!